

Egyptian Magic

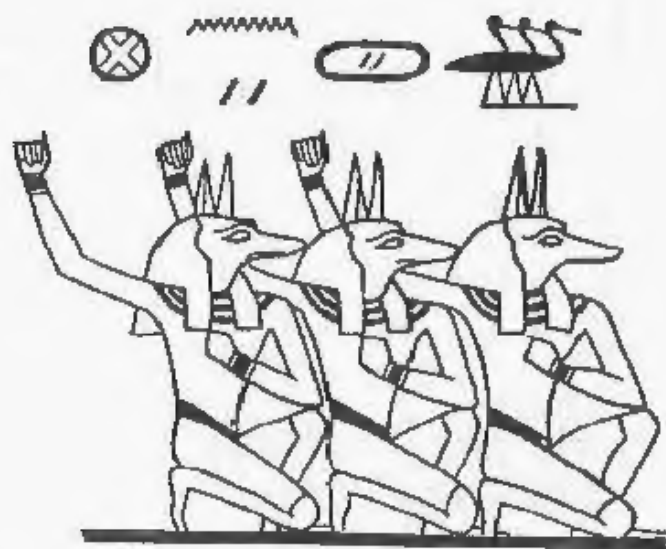
The Forbidden Secrets of Ancient Egypt



Joseph Toledano

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The Forbidden Secrets of Ancient Egypt



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P. O. Box 1123, Hod Hasharon 45111, Israel

Tel: 972-9-7412044

Fax: 972-9-7442714

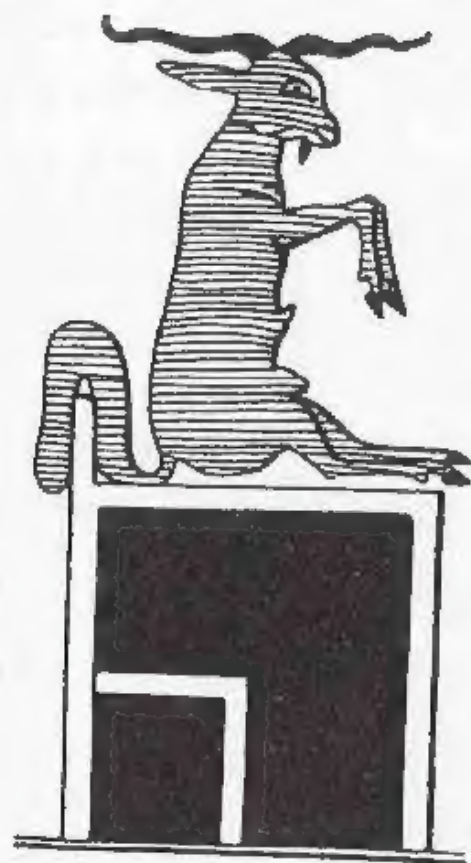
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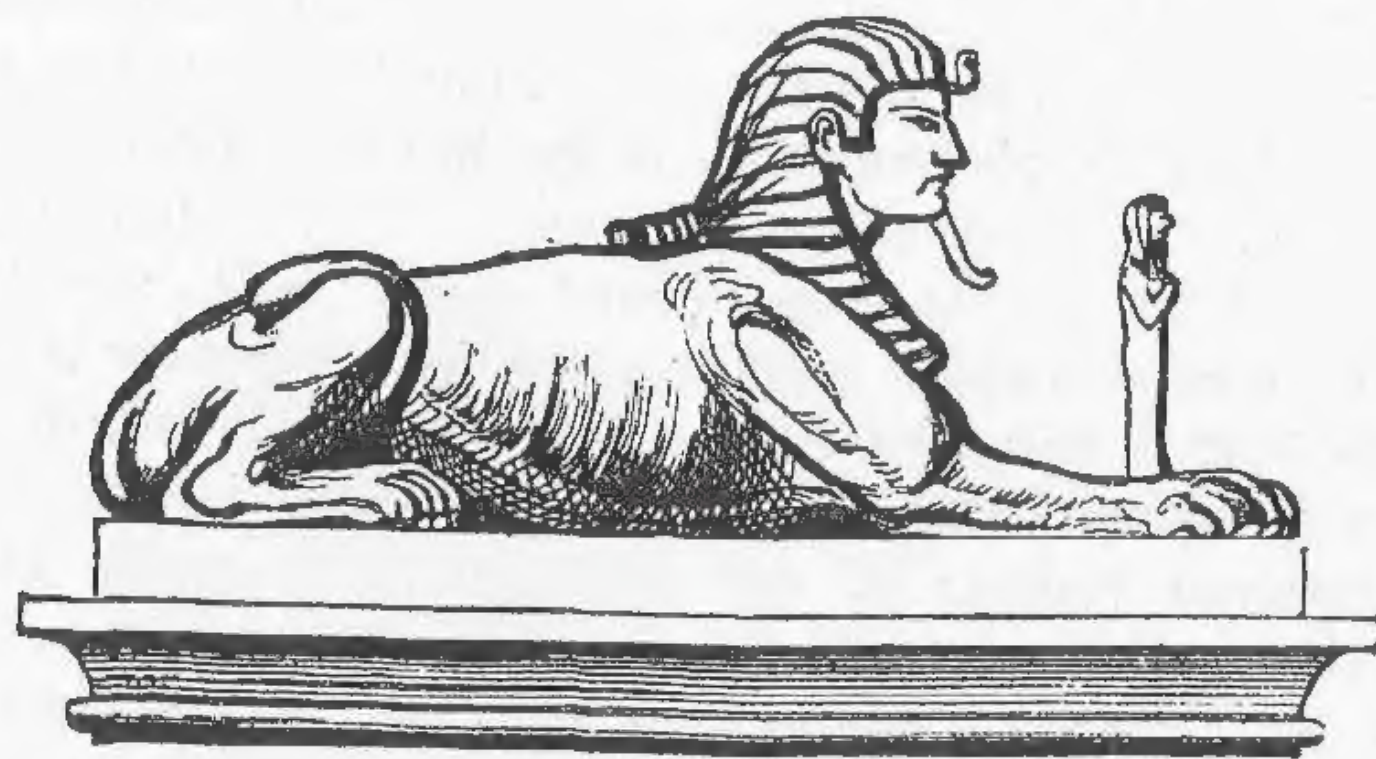
What historical period is more filled with wonder to modern Westerners than the civilization of ancient Egypt? Does any subject evoke more awe and curiosity than the magical secrets of the ages? When contemplating the title of this book, we conjure images of the Nile delta four or five thousand years ago – so many centuries and miles away, an age and place steeped richly in unfathomable majesty and mystery. Who could help but be fascinated by the wealth of knowledge and superstition that sprang from the minds of man in that famous valley? Indeed there is something deeply intriguing in the fact that the ancient Egyptian civilization survived for over three thousand years. It boggles the Western mind when we realize nearly all modern countries can boast histories of at most only hundreds of years. Although Ancient Egyptian culture died out almost two thousand years ago, we have so many well-preserved vestiges of the time that archeologists and historians have been able to provide us with extremely accurate and full descriptions of many aspects of Egyptian life during the periods of the Old, Middle, and New Kingdoms, ranging from roughly 3000 B.C. until the



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beginning of the Common Era. Egyptian culture indeed probably existed many thousands of years before that, but our records commence with the invention of writing, which is commonly held as the beginning of true civilization.

Magic arts, including everything from the eerie use of mystic incantations and the mixing of potions comprised of secret rare ingredients to the inscribing of magic words and names on walls and objects, played a major role in the lives of the ancient Egyptians. As we take a look at the culture of the times, we will see how magic was woven into its very fabric. One can only wonder how such beliefs and rituals may have played a part in the remarkable staying power of a civilization whose influence is ever-felt, in innumerable aspects, even two thousand years later as these words are penned and read.



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Life in Ancient Egypt



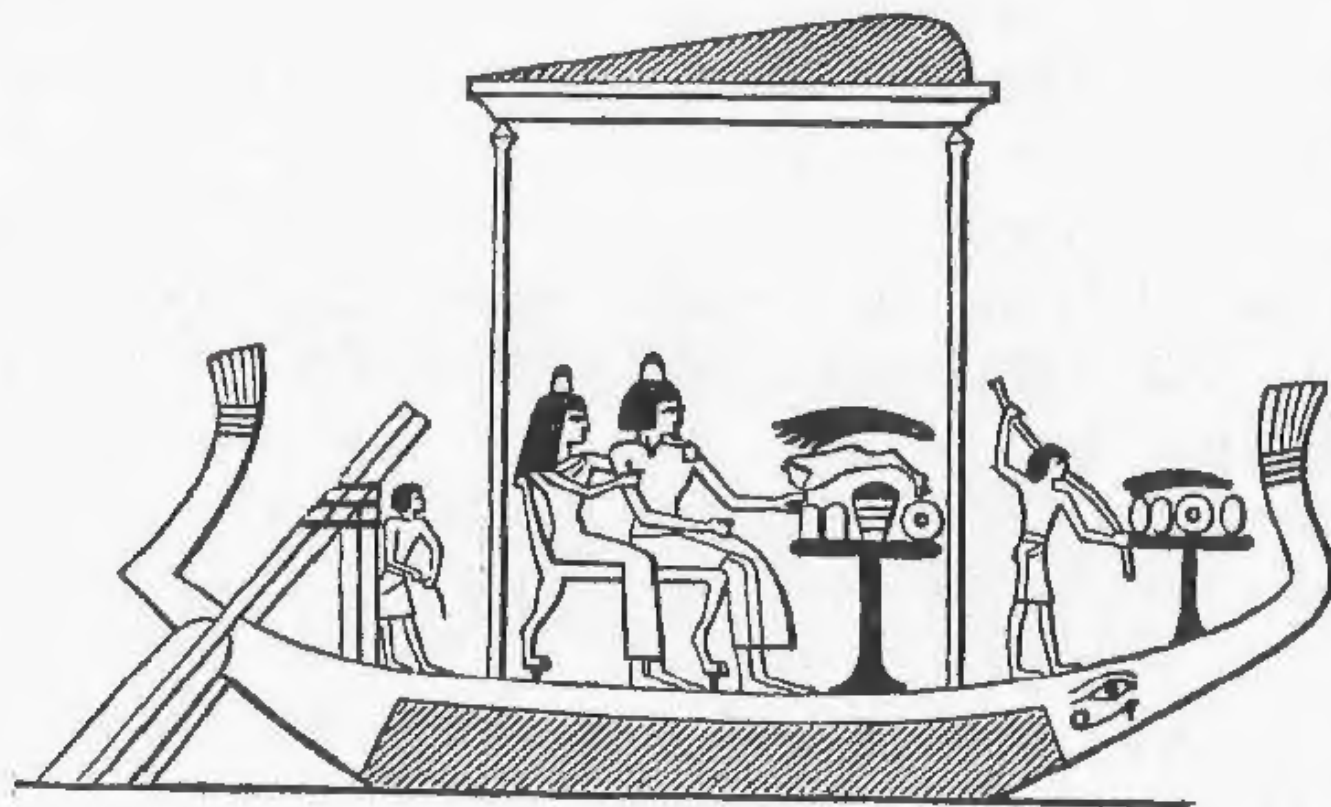
Ample information about Ancient Egyptian culture has survived in numerous forms, including various types of artifacts, paintings and reliefs, hieroglyphs, and written documents. The ancient tombs, of which there were many, were built to last – and last they did, offering up their vast array of inscriptions and decorations, and even preserved human remains as evidence of an elaborate and sophisticated culture which had every intention of continuing even into the life that awaits men when they depart this earth. The long reign of Egyptian society was painstakingly documented by the scribes and artists of the times, leaving a clear picture of their rich heritage. The Egyptians mastered a complicated and well-developed system of sacred and mystical carvings which consisted of symbols and drawings called hieroglyphs (a word coined later by the Greeks). These depicted details about every aspect of ancient Egyptian life and belief, and were deciphered in the nineteenth century by scholars who studied the Rosetta stone. We know about their wardrobe, hairstyles, diet, furniture, and even what they wore as decorative jewelry and the like. The bounty of scrolls and papyri which have managed to survive to the present include numerous descriptions of magical beliefs and ceremonies which indeed are among the most well-preserved of Egyptian writings.



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The papyri which have come to be known as the *Egyptian Book of the Dead* are perhaps the most famous and important of these. Translated directly, this "book" is called *Chapters of Coming Forth by Day*. It is a richly illustrated collection of magic spells, formulas, and incantations dealing with the after-life of the deceased. As we will see, life in the hereafter was as much, if not more, on the minds of the Ancient Egyptians as was their welfare in the here and now.

The economy of Egypt in ancient times was mostly agricultural. The rich Nile valley provided a fertile strip of land which supported abundant yearly crops and the raising of several types of domesticated animals. The population concentrated its dwellings on the lush banks of the Nile, beyond which lay the vast and forbidding African dessert. The river was so vital to the people's livelihood that it was itself worshipped almost as a godlike entity and the rising and receding of its waters formed the rhythm to which life



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marched. The rich land along the river provided food and livelihood, while the water itself was policed by the Pharaoh and employed as a transportation and communication line, keeping the population unified and under the control of the powers that be.

Egyptian society was stratified and strictly hierarchical. The Pharaoh was the sovereign king who ruled the country with the help of a royal court, a system of priests and priestesses, and the military forces. Most of the people participated in farming occupations, while large numbers were also employed as soldiers of the realm, and tomb builders for the Pharaoh. These formed the largest and lowest social level. Above them came the artisans, construction workers, and craftsmen. This caste erected the temples and government buildings according to the design of the royal architects, who were considered part of the Pharaoh's court – the highest of the Egyptian castes, which also included the physicians, royal scribes, and engineers.



Ancient Egyptian Religion



Any discussion of magic in Ancient Egypt must begin with a rudimentary understanding of the religious underpinnings of that society. In actuality, the concept of religion as we know it did not exist in Ancient Egypt. Religion was not a separate aspect of existence, but an element woven tightly within the strains of daily routine. If we define religion as a relationship with a deity, and a set of rituals and behaviors surrounding such relationship, then Egyptian life was religious in its totality. Everything was tied in with the gods, and all of life was ritualistic. As we will see, too, religion and magic were so interrelated that in some ways they could be considered one and the same!

The most important centers of "religious" practice were at Heliopolis, Memphis, and Hermopolis. Each city had its local gods and slightly different practices, but in each magic/religion played an equally important role. Priests and priestesses oversaw the daily activities of the people, maintaining a system of temples throughout the area. Though most of the priests were appointed by the Pharaoh, their caste was somewhat lower than that of the physicians



and engineers, and higher than the artisans and builders. The exception was the High Priest, who served in the Pharaoh's court, and had quite a bit of power. Often the priesthood would be passed along familial lines, which several generations of priests serving in succession.

Today, we think of a priest or other clergy person as one who has followed a spiritual calling to his profession. We might imagine that the Egyptian priests were seen as being a bit closer to the gods than the ordinary citizen. We might assume that the Pharaoh chose particularly learned or spiritual men and women to administer his temples and religious rites. We would be wrong in this assumption however. Instead, the priests of Ancient Egypt functioned much as ordinary men and women, and their priestly duties were no holier than any other occupation. They were charged with making sure society ran smoothly for the Pharaoh, who was himself considered akin to a god. The priest was expected to hone his skills in religious ceremony and magic, as we will see later, but these skills were considered on par with those of any other profession and accessible to any that might undertake this occupation. The priesthood had its own hierarchy within the general Egyptian societal ladder, and their numbers were large in proportion to the population.

While priests were not considered closer to the gods, they did earn a certain respect and honor as they got older and more experienced, just as can be expected in any field of endeavor. The High Priest, who stood at the very top of the priestly hierarchy, was usually an elderly wise priest who served as one of the Pharaoh's closest advisors and



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oversaw the activities of the lesser priests. Most of the priests studied astrology, constructed calendars, and counseled people in the use of magic and religious ritual for the attainment of their desires and needs. These were the lowest caste within the priestly hierarchy and formed their greatest numbers. They were present among the people in large numbers and played a large part in the daily lives of the populace. In addition to actual priests, there were "lay magicians" - men and women who had practiced the ceremonial and magic arts and assisted the priests and the people in the application of magical skills for various purposes. These could be considered the lowest on the totem pole of the priestly caste.

It was the Pharaohs, not the priests, who were considered to be "closer to gods" than ordinary man. In fact, some of the Pharaohs were considered actual gods, or at least descendant from gods. By maintaining their divine stature they were more easily able to control the masses, using the priests to carry out the tasks and duties entailed in the day to day practice of worship. The belief that mortal men could change into gods was commonplace, and often the Pharaoh's heirs were touted as "gods to be". Their divinity would be procured at such time that the Pharaoh



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ordered a particular initiation ritual be carried out by the priests.

The day to day routine of a priest could include such chores as caring for the gods' statues and images, blessing amulets, planning and executing religious festivals, and preparing healing potions, in addition to the many and varied daily religious ceremonial tasks.

The Ancient Egyptians believed strongly in the after-life, and in the power of the living to assure a safe passage into the underworld for the deceased. In fact, they believed that the living had a sacred responsibility to elaborately prepare the deceased and send him off in such a way that he would be assured of continuing satisfying "life" after death. The rites and rituals connected with death were far more numerous, in fact, than those dealing with the daily lives of the living.

Egyptian religion centered on its network of gods and goddesses, each representing a different aspect of nature or human life, and each having particular powers and characteristics. Most of the gods were personified, and were thought to be occupied with human-like activities





such as eating, drinking and celebrating, when not called upon to use their powers to control things in the mortal realm. The gods were believed to hunt, have sex, argue and struggle among themselves, and generally behave as did human men and women. The deities suffered and rejoiced with the same emotions that humans experienced. They grieved for losses, danced at marriages, and suffered the baser sensations of jealousy, envy, anger and shame as well. The gods were seen as approachable and accessible, and magic was used as the means of communication between gods and men. Different gods were worshipped at different periods during ancient Egyptian history, and at times they seemed to change their names and characteristics, slightly or drastically. Gods were added and discarded, and some areas of Egypt worshipped one or another god, while in another area a different god was prominent. The gods themselves had a certain hierarchy, there being more powerful major gods and lesser gods whose powers were commensurate with their importance. Most of the gods had multiple names. The most important Ancient Egyptian gods and their most commonly used names are cataloged below.



The Enhead: The Nine Gods of Creation



The most prominent and fully detailed of the Egyptian creation myths involves a family of nine gods which formed the *Enhead*. This myth originated in the area of Heliopolis but in time spread throughout Egypt. According to this story, in the beginning of time, out of primordial chaos there rose the god Atum, the first god, to whom it fell to plan and execute the formation of the earth and all that would dwell upon it. (Atum was often interchangeable with Ra in Egyptian myth) Atum began as a mighty serpent that slithered on the mist, but at some time later he morphed into human shape. When Atum had brought the earth into being, but had not yet envisioned the mortal man, he decided he needed more gods to help him. Atum took his semen into his mouth, and when he spat, out came Shu, the God of Air, and Tefenet, the Goddess of Water and Moisture. The two divine children went off to explore for an extended time and when they did not come back Atum feared them lost. He removed one of his eyes, and sent it off with the mission of finding the two young gods and returning them to him. When the eye accomplished this and Shu and Tefenet were back safely with their father, Atum wept tears of profound joy, and each of his tears became a mortal being, thus establishing the human race.



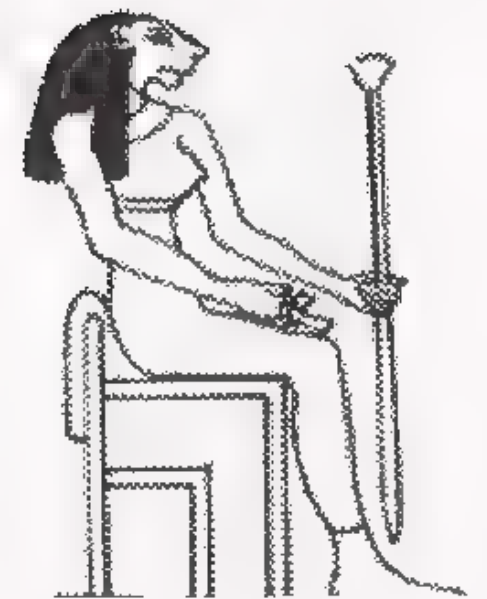
Shu and Tefenet became an incestuous couple, as would become common among the gods and kings of Egypt, and they produced two celestial children – Geb, God of the Earth, and Nut, the blue-skinned Goddess of the sky. In due course Geb and Nut also had intercourse, clinging so ferociously to one another that their father, Shu, had to intervene and separate them in order that their children might be born. Shu was to become known as the god of the dry winds of the desert. They produced two sets of twins - Osiris and Isis, and Seth and Nephthys.

Geb charged Osiris with the first throne of Egypt and Osiris ruled as the first Pharaoh along with his wife and sister Isis. Their brother Seth was ablaze with jealousy over the power his siblings had attained and became their rival and arch-enemy. Seth tricked Osiris into climbing into a chest, telling him that if he fit the chest would be given him as a gift. When Osiris was inside, Seth slammed shut the lid and ordered the chest thrown into the Nile. Aggrieved and angry, Isis searched for the chest until it was finally recovered days later with her husband's body inside. Seth, in order to make sure that Osiris could not be brought back to life, attacked the body and dismembered it, scattering its parts all over Egypt. Again, however, Isis prevailed. She was successful at finding and gathering all of her husband's limbs and organs and magically attached them into a whole body. Desperate to revive him she assumed the form of a hawk, and hovering over Osiris' body, she flapped her wings until the breath of life entered his lungs again. Osiris' former vitality was restored and he resumed his rule of Egypt. Seth was incensed at having been so foiled and vowed to remain the couple's enemy.



Atum

The Enhead



Tefenet



Shu



Osiris



Isis



Seth



Nephthys



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Soon after this, Isis conceived a child with Osiris, and fearing that Seth would come after the youngster in an attempt to do him harm, she went into seclusion to birth and raise him.

The child was born vital and healthy, and called Horus. When Horus grew up he was indeed challenged numerous times by his uncle, who tried to usurp him as Osiris' inheritor, but eventually judgment was pronounced in the Hall of Divine Judgment, overseen by Thoth, the God of Wisdom, that Horus should take his rightful place as heir to his father's throne. Seth was castrated and banished to the desert to nurse his resentment forever.

Osiris, perhaps the most important of the Egyptian gods, became the first mummy, wrapped by Anubis, God of the Underworld. Osiris then became the God of the salvation and resurrection of the dead. He greeted the deceased upon their arrival in the underworld and guided them on their way to judgment.

Horus indeed took over the reign of Egypt, and was known as the powerful God of the Sky. His right eye was the sun, and his left, the moon. The "Eye of Horus" became a mighty symbol in Egyptian art and religion. He was often depicted with the body of a man and the head of a large-eyed falcon. When in the form of a child, Horus was the god of silence, depicted as a toddler with his index finger to his lips.

Isis became one of the most important deities of Ancient Egypt. She exemplified motherhood and wifedom, and was



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worshipped as a goddess of magic as well. In fact, Isis was seen as multi-functional, having the powers of all of the other gods combined. She is said to have cried so bitterly at Osiris' death that the Nile rose and flooded. Isis was seen as a most compassionate goddess and her powers were often called upon to help people in need.

Seth became known as the God of Evil and Hostility, and was depicted with as a serpent or as a human with animal-like ears and a tail with an arrow-point. He was also the god of storms and natural disasters such as earthquakes.



Isis, Osiris, and Horus

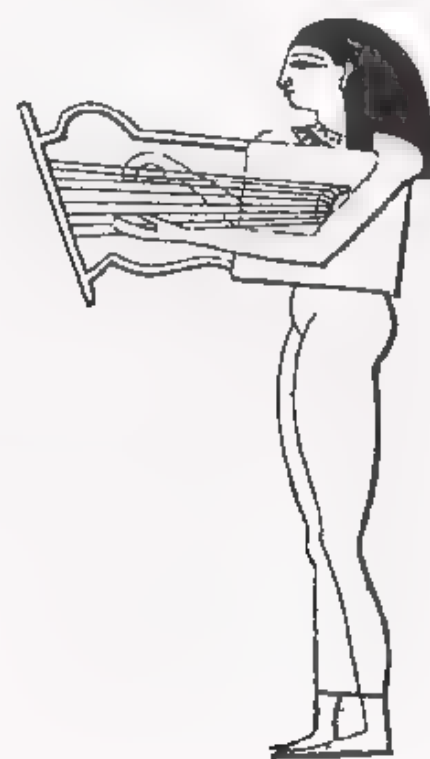


The Ogdoad



According to another ancient Egyptian creation myth, when the world was but a watery mass of chaos, there lived upon it eight gods, in pairs of male and female. Kek and Keket were the God and Goddess of Darkness, Nun and Nunet were the God and Goddess of Water, Heh and Hehet were the God and Goddess of infinity, and Amen and Amenet were the deities of invisibility.

The gods were in the form of frogs, and the goddesses in the form of snakes. These deities were believed to have formed the world, and then retired to the underworld where they oversaw the processes of nature from afar.



Other Creation Gods



The gods Khnum, Ra, and Ammon are also associated with creation myths, and are perhaps three additional names of the same divine entity as Atum. Khnum is depicted as the god of clay and molded images. He is said to have formed humans out of clay using a potter's wheel. Khnum had a ram's head and had immense importance as the god who controlled the yearly rising and waning of the Nile. Ammon, the God of Chaos and fertility is also associated with the creation and often said to be the first god, as Atum. Ra, God of the Sun, was at times one with the other creation gods, his name meaning "creative power". He rose each morning as a youth, and made his way across the sky, growing "older" as he went. By evening, he was an old man with a ram's head (Khnum), and during the night he passed through the underworld, emerging again in the morning as Ra the young virile sun-god of the dawn. He was symbolized by a full blazing sun.



Other Prominent Deities



Thoth, the God of Time, ruled the calendar and was the patron of the powerful written word. Thoth supported the arts of writing and inscription and was thought to have invented hieroglyphs. As God of Wisdom he was the patron of the scribes and the magicians. Thoth was often depicted with the body of a baboon or as a man with the head of an ibis, and carried a quill and scroll, ready to record all events. Thoth was thought to have created himself at the very beginning of time, out of a thought or word. The Egyptians believed that all of the words in the all-important Book of the Dead were inspired by the powerful god Thoth.



Khonsu, the God of the Moon, controlled its appearance in the sky and the cyclical waxing and waning of its visibility on earth. According to myth, the moon was bright at all times until Khonsu wagered some of its light in a bet with Thoth, which he lost, causing the moon to have to hid its glory for a portion of every month.



Hathor was the Goddess of Midwifery and Nurturing. She was the protector and champion of woman and children, and supporter of conception, pregnancy, and birth. When the infant god Horus needed to be nursed, Hathor assumed the form of a cow and suckled the child. When his evil uncle Seth gouged out Horus' eyes, it was Hathor who restored them. Hathor also nurtured the souls of the deceased, greeting them with nourishment as they entered the next world. Hathor was also the goddess of music, dancing, and foreign lands.



Seven Hathors were often depicted as lovely ladies or as women with the heads of cows, but most often as seven cows. The seven would attend royal births, often pronouncing the preordained fate of the child.

Khepry, the God of Rebirth and Dawn, was depicted as a scarab beetle, one of the most prominent and important of the ancient Egyptian symbols. The scarab would roll its eggs into a ball of dung, out of which new life would emerge. This was likened to the pushing up of the sun each morning into the sky.

Ma'at, the Goddess of Justice and Order oversaw the harmony of life on earth and in the underworld. She was symbolized by a single ostrich plume, which she wore on her head. As the Goddess of Truth Ma'at judged the Pharaohs who had to answer to her as to the justice and fairness with which they ruled.





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During the judgment of the dead, Ma'at weighed the deceased heart against her feather to decide if he was a person of righteousness deserving of entrance into the afterlife.

Ammit, the crocodile goddess was on hand at the judgment of the deceased to devour any deceased soul whose heart outweighed Ma'at's feather.

Apep, the evil serpent, tried daily to disrupt the orderly passage of day into night. He battled the god Ra as he made his way across the sky in his boat, and at times even managed to overcome him temporarily. At these times, the sky would darken and thunderstorms would rage until Ra was able to take control of the battle. Apep lived in the rivers of the underworld where only the constant recitation of magic spells by the living and those who had crossed over kept him from destroying all good in the universe.



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Min (also called **Amsu**), the God of Virility was the husband of Ketesh, Goddess of feminine love. Min was depicted with an erect phallus, holding a thunderbolt.

Meresger, the Goddess of Sickness and Wellness, was sometimes depicted as a mountain peak in the shape of a woman, and other times as a snake or a woman with the head of a snake. She had the power to restore health, and also to inflict disease.

Nekhbet, the Goddess of Upper Egypt, often took the shape of a vulture, and hovered above the Pharaoh and his court, protecting them by holding her claws in the forms of the hieroglyphic 'O' to symbolize eternity.

Sekhmet, the Goddess of War, championed the forces of good against the forces of evil. Sekhmet accompanied the Pharaohs when they ventured into battle and was usually depicted with the head of a lion. She also supported the physicians and magicians in healing of disease. According to myth, Ra created Sekhmet from fire in order to punish humans for their wrongdoings. If her wrath were incurred she would cause disease and physical suffering. She evolved, however, into the protector of righteous men and healers.

Ptah, husband of Sekhmet, was God of Arts and Crafts, and was also worshipped as one the gods of creation, responsible for fashioning the human body for reuse in the underworld. Depicted as an elderly human with a beard





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and skullcap, Ptah took his orders from Thoth, who specified how the heavens and earth should be created.

Bastet, the cat-headed Goddess of Fertility exemplified gentleness and good humor.



Bes, the God of Fun, was the champion of pleasure and entertainment as well as family and children. Bes took the figure of a comical bearded dwarf.

Anubis was the God of Preservation of the Dead, and oversaw the mummification of the deceased. He was depicted with the head of a jackal on a human body. The Egyptian myths are inconsistent as to his parentage, and sometimes he is the son of Osiris, while in other stories he is the son of the evil Seth. Anubis was the god who took the dead under his care and saw them safely to their day of judgment. He was said to have originated the embalming process and to oversee the preservation of the body after death.



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Imhotep, God of medicine, was himself an architect. It was Imhotep who planned the building of the Step Pyramid, and was the patron of the scribes and physicians. Imhotep was said to have invented sacred architecture and oversaw the magic inherent in building and construction. When buildings were erected according to the correct shapes and ratios, their power was tremendous. A building could be consecrated to a magical function and then continue to carry it out virtually eternally, or for as long as the structure stood. Besides the pyramids, examples of sacred architecture can be found in the ancient temples, which were built according to the principles of Imhotep, along with prescribed ritual and ceremony.





Controlling the Gods



So where does the magic come in? While magic, to the Western mind, occupies a place outside mainstream religion, perhaps even a shady and not exactly legitimate place, such was far from the truth in Ancient Egypt. In fact, at that time magic and religion were almost interchangeable concepts.

The ancient Egyptians believed that while the gods had the power to control events on earth, people had the power to control the gods! This was the task of magic – to bring about the desired actions of the gods. An Egyptian did not simply “pray” to his gods, he believed he had the ability to force a god’s hand - provided the proper magic activity was performed! A prayer, in Ancient Egypt was useless unless it was chanted in a prescribed manner and used the correct words and names in exactly the correct order.

The average Egyptian, indeed virtually every Egyptian, was devoutly religious. Everyone performed religious rituals and ceremonies daily and in connection with most every activity, even the most mundane. Most of these ceremonies were in fact what we would describe as “magical”. The gods were worshiped at every turn. Since the gods controlled everything, even the simplest daily act



was accompanied by a ceremony intended to keep the appropriate god appeased and in the frame of mind to make things go smoothly. Even when not actively engaged in ritual or ceremony, the Egyptian would invariably wear something on his body, or carry an amulet, designed to keep the gods where he wanted them.

While everyday citizens had a working knowledge of the ordinary ceremonies that constituted the basic religion, the priests’ job was to make a specialty of magic/religious skills. The priests had arsenals of spells, incantations, magic words and formulas which they could utilize to bring about what was desired from the gods. Thus the priests were actually what we would call magicians. They worked from temple laboratories where they memorized their spells and formulated their potions. According to some accounts, people could visit the priests in the temples for purposes of requesting magic rituals on their behalf, but they did not speak directly with the priests. The temples were usually surrounded by high barriers through which only priests could pass. The people would approach the outer walls and be heard by a priest through a small window.

Adjacent to the temple was often a structure called the House of Life, which was essentially a library of magical books within which all magical knowledge was conserved. The books contained detailed descriptions and instructions for all manner of magic and thus were extremely powerful treatises guarded carefully from the hands of common people. Simply reading these books was thought to imbibe a person with tremendous magical ability. Books too precious to be entrusted to this library were hidden in



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various ways throughout Egypt. The legend of Setnau tells of a prince so desirous of learning the powerful magic secrets of the god Thoth that he devoted his life to searching out his hidden book of spells. Setnau discovered that the book was concealed in a tomb in a graveyard, and taking his brother for assistance, he went there to seek it. The brothers indeed found the wondrous book, and so powerful were the energies emanating from it, the tomb was lit with a wondrous white light.

Since magic/religion was their full-time job, naturally the priests were considered vastly more knowledgeable than the rest of the populace in matters magical. In fact the priests were considered such powerful magicians that their abilities to exact what was wanted from the gods were almost infinite. Anything was possible, from the healing of the sick to the aversion of natural disaster. Even bringing the dead back to life was not thought outside the bounds of possibility. One story holds that a Pharaoh employed a magician possessing the ability to restore mutilated animals to full health. He could decapitate a goose, an ox or any other animal, and then cause the head to reattach, making the animal as good as new. These were not idle superstitions held by the simplest of men, but firm beliefs – truths, as it were, held by the most educated and knowledgeable of Egyptian society. If, or when, magic “failed”, it was taken simply as a sign of the gods’ obstinacy or that for whatever reason the gods were not willing at that time to grant the wish or request. The magic itself was not held in question, and the failure was not noted as evidence that the magic was impotent. The belief that it would work “next time” remained as strong as ever.

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Most Egyptians had a small shrine to the various gods in their homes, especially those which represented the daily activities of families and which protected the home.

Magic was extremely exacting and precise. Nothing was left to chance and certainly spells were never ad-libbed or improvised. It was believed that the slightest diversion from the “true” magic ritual would cause its nullification. Magic was painstakingly executed with the utmost keeping to the minutest detail. One did not simply recite the words of an incantation or mix up a potion according to recipe. Preceding the magic was an elaborate preparation procedure without which the magic would lose its power. All ingredients had to be completely pure and fresh, and the some magic called for virginal participants or at least abstinence from carnal activity for a number of days before





the magic was carried out. Tools or implements used were carefully cleaned and sometimes had to be newly devised for the magic. Wands were commonly used as symbols of the priest's or magician's authority to summon the gods. Dawn was the chosen hour for magic, since the energies just before the sun rose were most intense. A clean, dark secret chamber was best used for magic, and the place would be purified and sanctified before the magic ingredients were brought in. The substances used for magic were not always easy to come by and sometimes required intense searching. Certain rituals called for mucus from a cow's nose or an animal with a particular marking or deformity such as a two-tailed lizard. Human urine, menstrual blood, saliva, and semen however were commonly required, and far easier to obtain! In light of the time-consuming nature of much of Egyptian magic, it is not surprising that an entire caste of people was needed to make magic their full-time occupation.

Egyptian magic took many and varied forms, as we will see. Magical power was held within names and particular words and vowel sounds. It was concentrated within images and objects, such as statues and talismans. Magical power was contained in pictures and symbols, and in the performance of ceremonies and the chanting of incantations. Egypt's reputation as a civilization steeped in magical knowledge was known throughout the world.



Magic for Life



The use of magic, it can be said, predated even the existence of the Egyptian gods themselves. Perhaps this explains the belief that magic was more powerful even than the gods. The purposes of magic encompassed just about any human purpose that existed. Magic was employed to prevent events from occurring (such as natural disasters), to cause an event to occur (such as the conception of a child), and to change the human mindset in relation to the events (as in the banishing of a fear). Magic was called upon for healing of the sick and for protection against the dangers inherent in any person's life. Magic was used to control the weather, to ensure a continuing food supply, and to bless the union of man and wife. Divination and oracle magic could tell people what lay ahead for them, and exorcist magic could oust the spirit of a god from a person or object. Magic could attract love, repel demons, and direct the course of battles between nations. In short, magical uses in the life of the ancient Egyptian were as varied as the imaginings of man himself. Exacting spells and formulas for each of these purposes were contained in the papyrus books held in the temple libraries. Translation of the spells is difficult due to the use of particular sounds and vocalizations which do not make up words as such, but are used expressly for the spells.



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To deflect someone's anger: Hold the name of the god Khnum, written in the oil of myrrh in your left hand and say, "I repel the anger of ____"

Should it be necessary to become temporarily invisible: Make a paste of beetle dung, unripe olive oil, and the fat or eye of a night owl, and cover your body with it completely. Appeal to the god Ra by reciting all of his names and chant "make me invisible until sunset".

A spell for increased strength: "I am Ammon! Give me your strength" (Say this seven times while holding your thumbs between your fingers.

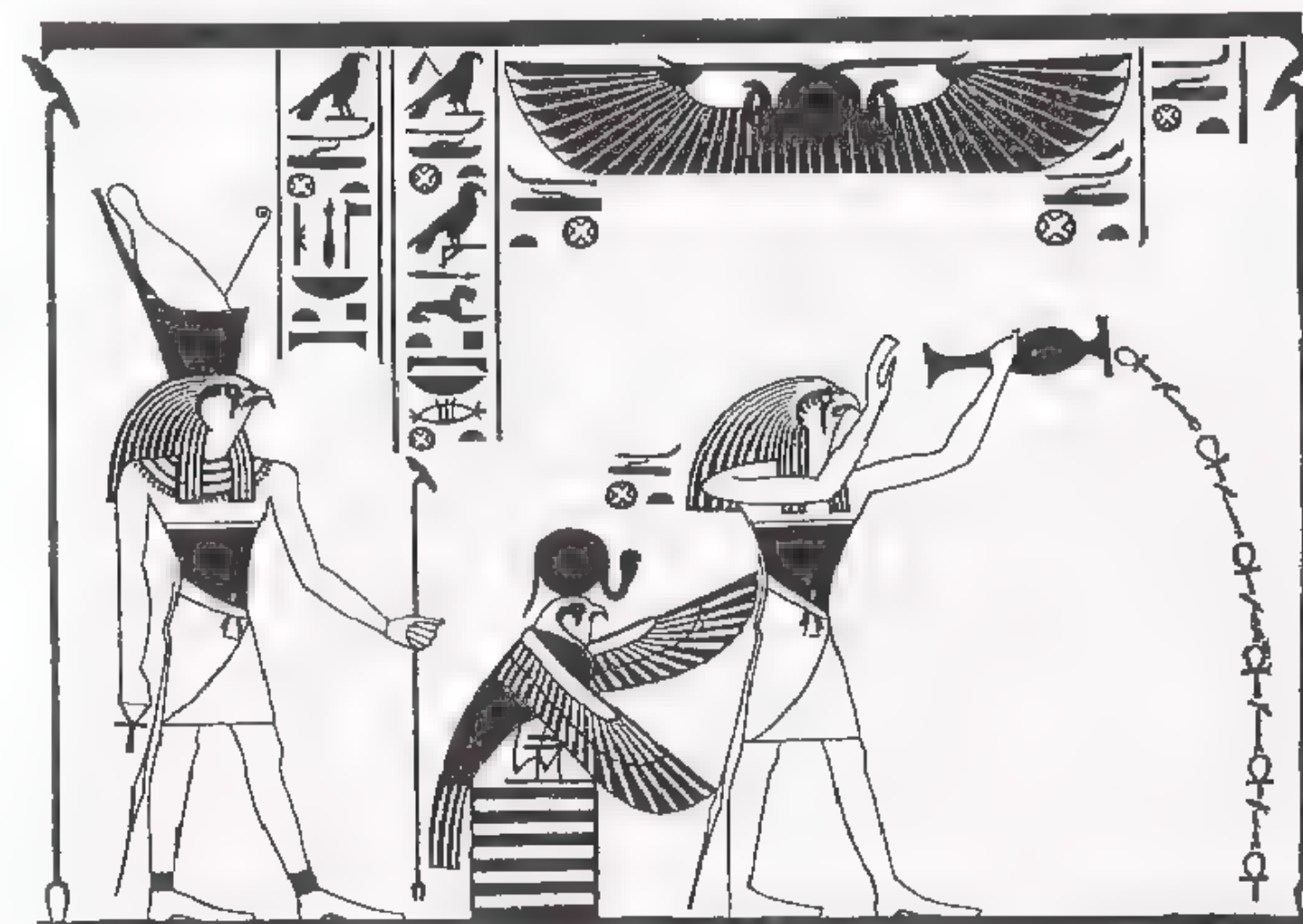
Magic was to be used only for the good of humankind and any employment of "black magic" to inflict harm or injury on others was an offense punishable by death. Nevertheless, we know that negative magic was occasionally used, as certain papyri have been preserved which contain pictures and words bearing witness to the intent of one person to cause the death of another using magic. One such papyrus depicts the god Anubis with his jackal head aiming his bow and arrow at the object of the black spell in the text.

Magic to control large bodies of water was an important theme. In the familiar Bible story of the parting of the Red Sea the Children of Israel escaped across the dry sea bed as the mighty waters stand great walls, only to wash back into place as the Egyptian armies tried to overtake them. This story is predated by many recountings of water magic of a

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very similar nature. The parting of a body of water is mentioned in numerous recovered papyri from periods before the exodus of Israel from Egypt. One such story tells of a bored Pharaoh who turned to his advisors for help. It was suggested that the king go sailing on a lake, and he does so, along with twenty virgins, the sight of whom delighted him as they paddled their boats in front of his party. As the virgins rowed, and the king began to enjoy himself, one of the maidens accidentally dropped her hair ornament into the lake and helplessly watched as it sank to the depths. The king could not bear to see the young woman's misery, and called a magician to make things right. By speaking magic words, the magician causes the water of the lake to stand aside in great wet walls, revealing the sandy bottom which gave up the maiden's ornament.





Names and Words of Power



Magic played a large part in the Egyptian story of creation or the world. *Heka*, the power of Magic, hovered over the "waters of chaos" when nothing existed but a vast formless universal energy. Magic was a potential power waiting to be unleashed. When nothing existed but magic itself, it was the utterance of a magical name which set the creation into motion. This very utterance of the name was powerful enough to set in motion the creation of the entire universe. The gods went on to create each individual entity by pronouncing its name.

Names carried such profound energies that at times the mere knowledge of name could perform feats of magic. In one legend, when the god, *Ra*, refused to reveal his name to the goddess *Isis*, his power over the universe was intact, but when she was able to persuade him to reveal his name, this knowledge allowed her to rival him in strength. In order to get *Ra* to reveal his true name, *Isis* caused him to receive a snake-bite, and offered to save him from certain death if only he would tell his name. So strongly did *Ra* wish to retain exclusive knowledge of his true name, and thus his unlimited powers, he nearly perished from the venomous wound before agreeing to whisper his name to *Isis*. She did cure *Ra*, and because she now knew his name, she retained



some of his power, and from that day on, she shared it with new initiates into the rites of *Isis*, giving them the ability to perform powerful magic.

A person's name was considered an essential life-sustaining element of his self. When a man knew his neighbor's name, he wielded a certain power over him, since the name could be used for good or ill. By creating a man's name in writing and then blotting it out, that man could be injured or destroyed. When a child was born he had no true existence until his name was pronounced and the gods had heard it. The name was believed to embody the soul itself, so that a baby without a name had not yet acquired his very life's essence, even though he may breathe, squirm, and cry. Parents were careful to choose a name which carried the energy of the personality they wished their offspring to exhibit. The choice of the name was considered as important and momentous as the physical birth, since it was tantamount to the spiritual birth of the child. However once the name was known to the gods, a person usually went through life using only a nickname or alias, keeping his real name secret until death in order to protect the magic within it.

Seth, the God of darkness, chaos and hostility, had many names, and was able to do his evil using any one of them. A person wishing to neutralize the power of *Seth* in his life would need to have knowledge of the name under which the god was acting against him. If he performed magic aimed at destroying a monster set in motion by *Seth* and failed to use the correct name, the magic was ineffective. Even proper pronunciation and intonation of

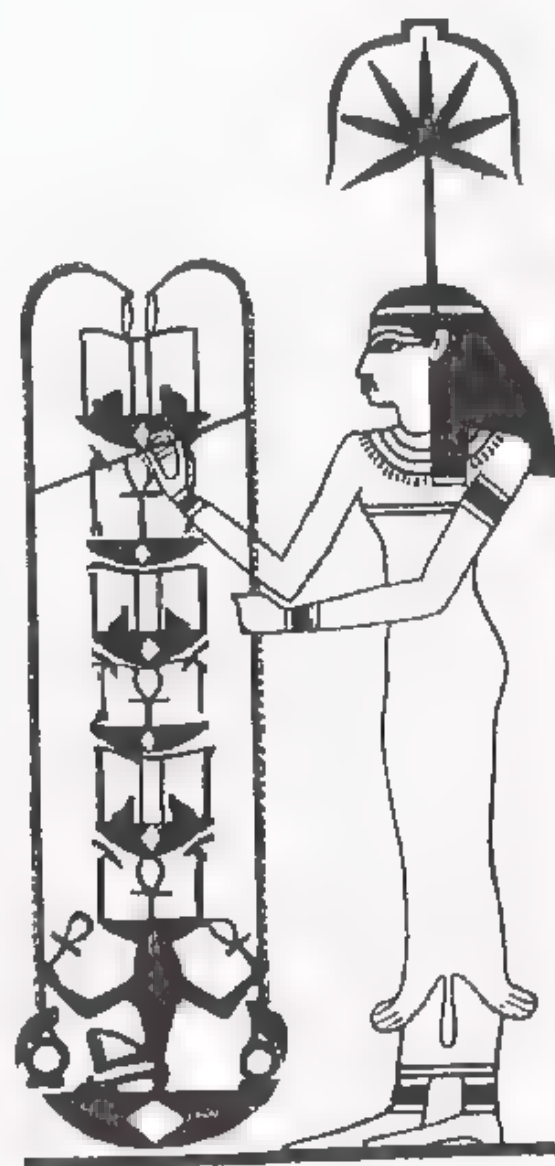


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the name was vital. This illustrates the power within the name itself – only symbolic physical destruction of the name (such as by inscribing it on a papyrus and burning it) could destroy the creature or the undesired energy. Knowledge of the names of any evil entities could protect a person from any ill-intent by these. In many cases only the priests knew all of the names of the gods, and which name was appropriate for the human need being addressed. There was danger in the inappropriate use of the names of the gods, as a wrong utterance could result in disaster. Often spells and ceremonies performed by priests would include long lists of names, in an effort not to leave out a single possible name used by the god in question.

When Seth wished to harm his nephew Horus, he tried to trick the latter into giving his true name, but Horus cleverly eluded his uncle's efforts by inventing various names to throw him off course.

A man could even invoke the name of a god in order to temporarily identify with and acquire that god's powers. The story is told of a man sailing on a boat who is about to be attacked by a water monster. The man stood on the deck of the boat with an egg in his hand and chanted: "I am Amsu, I am

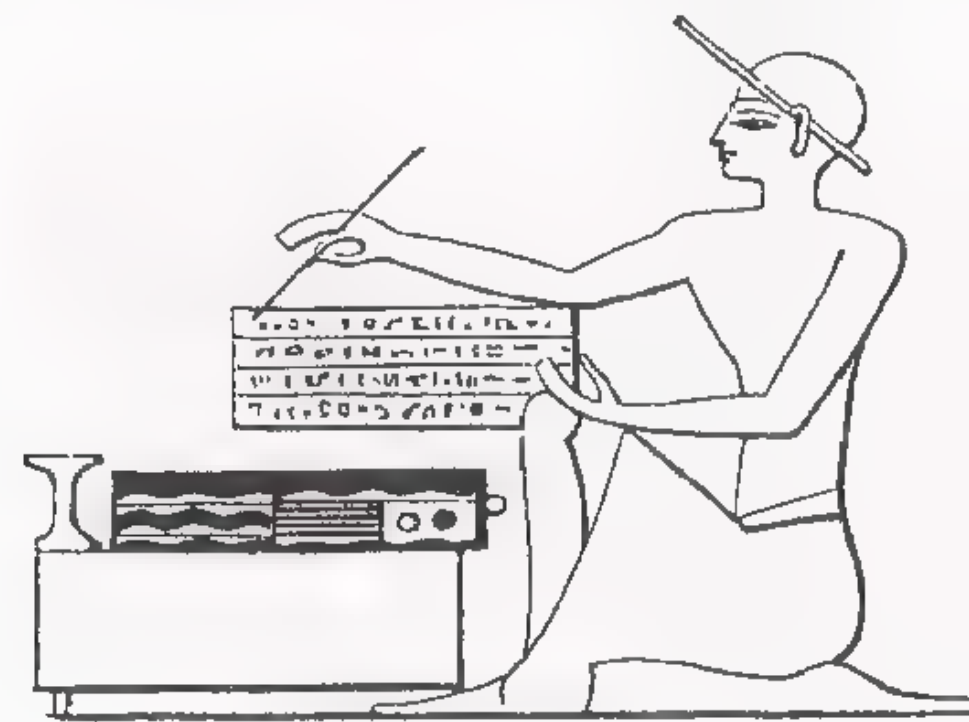


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Amsu", which caused the strength of the god to flow into his being. Upon hearing the god's name, the monster became afraid and fled. Priests and magicians, when chanting spells and incantations would often speak as if they had taken on the name of a god as their own, speaking in the first person from the god's perspective. "I am Horus, calling upon the magic of my mother Isis" was a common chant. When a cockroach was coming uncomfortably near, one could cry out: "I am Khonsu speaking the words of Re! Stay away!"

Words and ordinary language had power just as concentrated and frightening as that of names. It was believed that when a word or concept was inscribed or written, the actual energy of the concept or action was within the letters. This magical energy could be imbibed by dissolving the words into beer and drinking it. Similarly, a magic word could be licked off the surface it was written on. Words of Power were called "Heku", which loosely translated means "magic words". Spoken language too, was





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powerful and divine, and words were not wasted or spoken lightly. Just as knowing the name of a man or god gave one power over them, knowing the name of an element and using it correctly wielded great possibilities for the manipulation of events. Speaking a word unleashed the forces of magic within it. Inscribing a word on papyri, or engraving it into stone or any other element preserved and concentrated its powers. Subsequent erasure or destruction of the word dissolved its powers.

The god Osiris, who overcame ever adversity including death and dismemberment to become the all-powerful god of the dead, did so by use of Words of Power, given to him by the god Thoth, who taught him the proper use and intonation of the words. Without such words, Osiris would have been powerless.

In a very real sense, the scribes of Ancient Egypt were the keepers of magical powers just as were the priests and magicians. The scribes were honored and revered for their ability to write, since writing was tantamount to capturing



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and preserving the magical power of words. Scribes studied diligently for years to master the art of inscribing the thousands of hieroglyphic symbols into a variety of materials such as stone, metal, and glass, in addition to the papyrus which was the precursor of modern paper. Since the vast majority of the population was unschooled in writing, the scribes' abilities were extraordinary and greatly respected. The image of the scribe hard at work bent over a papyrus is one captured time and again in Ancient Egyptian artwork. While it was the priests' job perhaps to know what needed writing, the scribes were vital for the carrying out the inscription of the "medju-netjer", or "divine words".

Numbers, too, were significant to magic, and many spells and formulas specified numbers of objects in multiples of three, whereas multiples of five or two were rarely mentioned. For example, one spell used to attract love called for nine apple pips mixed in urine.



Figures, Images, and Pictures



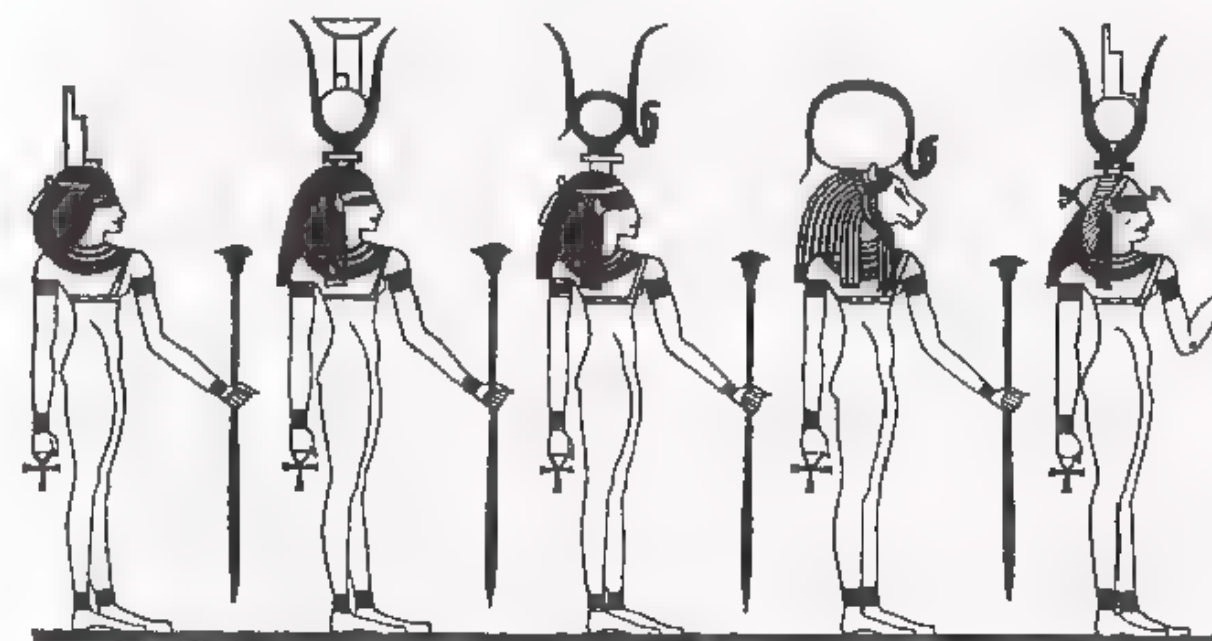
Just as powerful as the names of and words for people and concepts were the images which depicted them. A picture of a god or demon *was* that god or demon, and contained the same powers as the entity itself. Statues and other figures were likewise not just representative of a deity or king, but contained their very soul and essence. Once a figure or image had been created, its erasure or destruction could destroy the god it represented, or at least the part of that god's spirit which resided in the figure. The construction of such objects, then, gave the priests and the people a fairly easy way to control the gods. Since once the statue of a god was formed, part of that god's spirit was within it, this meant that by seeing to the welfare (or the detriment) of the statue, they affected the welfare of the god himself. Also, when a god was being secretive and was loathe become readily available, setting up a statue and chanting the appropriate magic words compelled the god to occupy it, thus delivering his reluctant self to who ever desired his presence.

While there were some statues in public areas, most figures of the deities were maintained and protected by the priests, within the temple walls. The priests executed many rituals and ceremonies directed toward the statues. On



some occasions, the statues were reported to move, speak, and weep – further evidence that they were believed to be just as “alive” as the gods themselves. Statues of gods were sometimes consulted concerning the future or asked to give advice on some problem. The story is passed down of a statue who revealed the identity of a thief. When garments were stolen from a warehouse, the guard attended a festival where priests paraded statues of the gods and allowed people to approach them with questions. The guard asked the statue of Ammon to recover the stolen merchandise, and the statue “nodded” its agreement to help. A list of possible suspects in the crime was read, and upon hearing a certain name, the statue “nodded” again. The suspect eventually confessed to the filching of the garments and returned them.

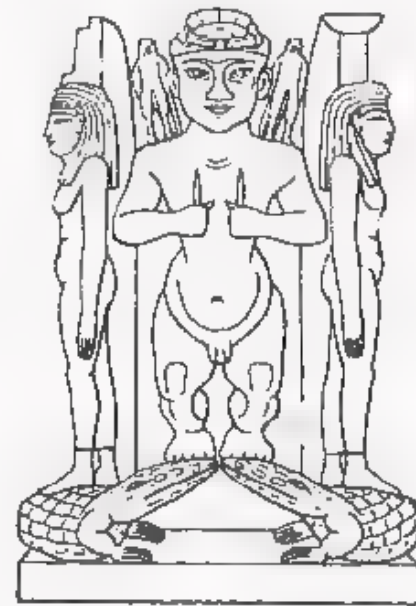
When an ambassador from the Kingdom of Bekhten came to Egypt to beseech the Pharaoh on behalf their princess who was ill, a boat with five statues of gods was dispatched to perform the healing. The statues were received as if the gods themselves had made a personal visit.





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Not only the power of the gods could be preserved in figures, but the essence of an ordinary animal or of an invented entity such as a monster could be infused into a molded figure. Wax was commonly used by the priests and kings to form images for use in magic. One notable story tells of a woman who betrayed her husband with another man. The husband, a priestly official, fashioned a crocodile from wax, and ordered it be thrown into the river while his wife's partner in treachery bathed. When it touched the water, the wax crocodile instantly became real, and seizing the hapless lover, it carried him to the river bottom, where it held him for seven days. On the seventh day, the Pharaoh strolled by the river with the husband, who in order to demonstrate what had happened, ordered the crocodile to bring the man back up. The Pharaoh recoiled at the sight of the "monster", but the priest simply scooped it out of the water, causing it to revert instantly to a harmless wax figure. When the Pharaoh was told the story of the wife's deeds with the man being held by the crocodile, the crocodile was ordered into the water again, and told to remain in the depths and keep the man with him indefinitely.



Another story has it that when Rameses III ruled in the second century B.C., a number of his high officials conspired against his rule with the goal of overtaking his throne. They planted a web of female spies among the royal

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court. One of the officials found a book of magic in the royal library which contained detailed instructions for the use of wax figures and by following the secret recipes in this book, the official made wax figures of the men of the royal court. Using magic spells, the official caused his victims to fall in love with the harem spies. In this way the women were able to extract secrets and information during the vulnerable moments of sexual ecstasy.

Other wax figures were formed in the image of the Pharaoh Rameses himself with the purpose of bringing him suffering and ultimately death. The members of this conspiracy were ultimately caught and charged, and their punishment was for each to die at his own hand. Indeed, they were compelled to commit suicide, one after the other.



Rameses III



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During the fourth century B.C., Egypt was ruled by the Pharaoh Nectanabus. While all of the Pharaohs were said to possess divine powers, this king was reputed to be one of the greatest sorcerers and magicians of all, and he kept Egypt safe from enemies by his powerful knowledge of the use of wax figures. Whenever an enemy power advanced up on the country by sea, Nectanabus would send out his navy to meet them, and as they made preparations to sail, he would retire to his magic laboratory and fill a tub with water. Into the tub he set wax figures in the shapes of ships, officers, troops, and weaponry of all kinds representing both sides of the conflict. Chanting certain prescribed spells he would beseech the gods to infuse the models with divine will, and cause them to come to life. The wax figures would spring into animation, and upon the surface of the water in the tub the Egyptian vessels and men would soon vanquish those of the enemy, while on the sea itself, the corresponding real enemy ships would sink or retreat.

Time and again the Pharaoh Nectanabus used this magic to maintain Egypt's might over its enemies, until one day



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the magic ceased to work. As usual, the king had set his wax figures afloat with a magic spell and a prayer to the gods to defeat the enemy. This time, however, the wax Egyptian boats and soldiers turned against Egypt itself, in a clear message from the gods that Nectanabus' rule was over. He understood immediately, and fled Egypt for Macedonia where he lived out his days as a sorcerer and physician.

In 356 B.C., Olympias, the wife of Philip King of Macedonia, was pregnant. Nectanabus manipulated her dreams in order that she might come to believe her offspring was that of the Egyptian God of Gods, Ammon. Nectanabus constructed a wax figure of a woman, and carved Olympias' name into its breast. He then gathered special herbs which were had magical influence on dreams, and anointed the figure in the oils of these herbs. He called upon the gods to make Olympias dream that she was embraced by Ammon and that Ammon told her the child was his. Olympias had the dream, and from the moment her son, who would be Alexander the Great, was born, she told him of his kinship to the god. The knowledge that he was descendent from the great god played an important part in Alexander's self-image, and thus in the course of history.

The great Greek philosopher Aristotle was Alexander's tutor throughout his childhood and youth, and remained his mentor from afar when Alexander ventured forth with his armies, never to return. This story of Alexander the Great is retold by an Egyptian writer who recorded it in the 13th century B.C. Aristotle, presumably having been coached by



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the sorcerer Nectanabus, presented his student with the gift of a wooden box containing wax figures in the forms of soldiers and fighters representing enemies from every nation Alexander was to encounter in his adventures. The figures were nailed to the floor of the box, in prostrate positions, bearing wax weapons which were damaged and disabled. Their spears blunt, and their bow-strings cut, they were pathetic figures of impotent enemies. Aristotle instructed Alexander never to let the box out of his sight, and to recite certain spells when lifting the box or setting it down. Could this box have played a part in Alexander's unflinching belief that he was invincible?

Years later, when Alexander the Great and his armies had reached Egypt and the building of the city of Alexandria was underway, the newly constructed walls were attacked by monsters of the deep that rose nightly from the sea. Powerful magic was needed to protect the fledgling city from these vandals, and Alexander and the local priests and magicians devised a daring plan. Alexander had himself enclosed in a glass box along with two artists with sketchbooks. The box was lowered into the sea, giving the men a clear view of the evil creatures. Accurate drawings of the swimming monsters were quickly made, showing human forms with heads of beasts, armed with various implements of destruction such as axes, saws, and hammers. Alexander signaled his servants to haul the box back onto the land, and artisans went to work immediately, fashioning life sized wax models in the shapes depicted in the drawings. These huge figures were set up on pedestals near the new walls of Alexandria, and when at nightfall the monsters again rose up to batter the



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city, they saw images of themselves with weapons raised against them, and they magically disappeared forever.



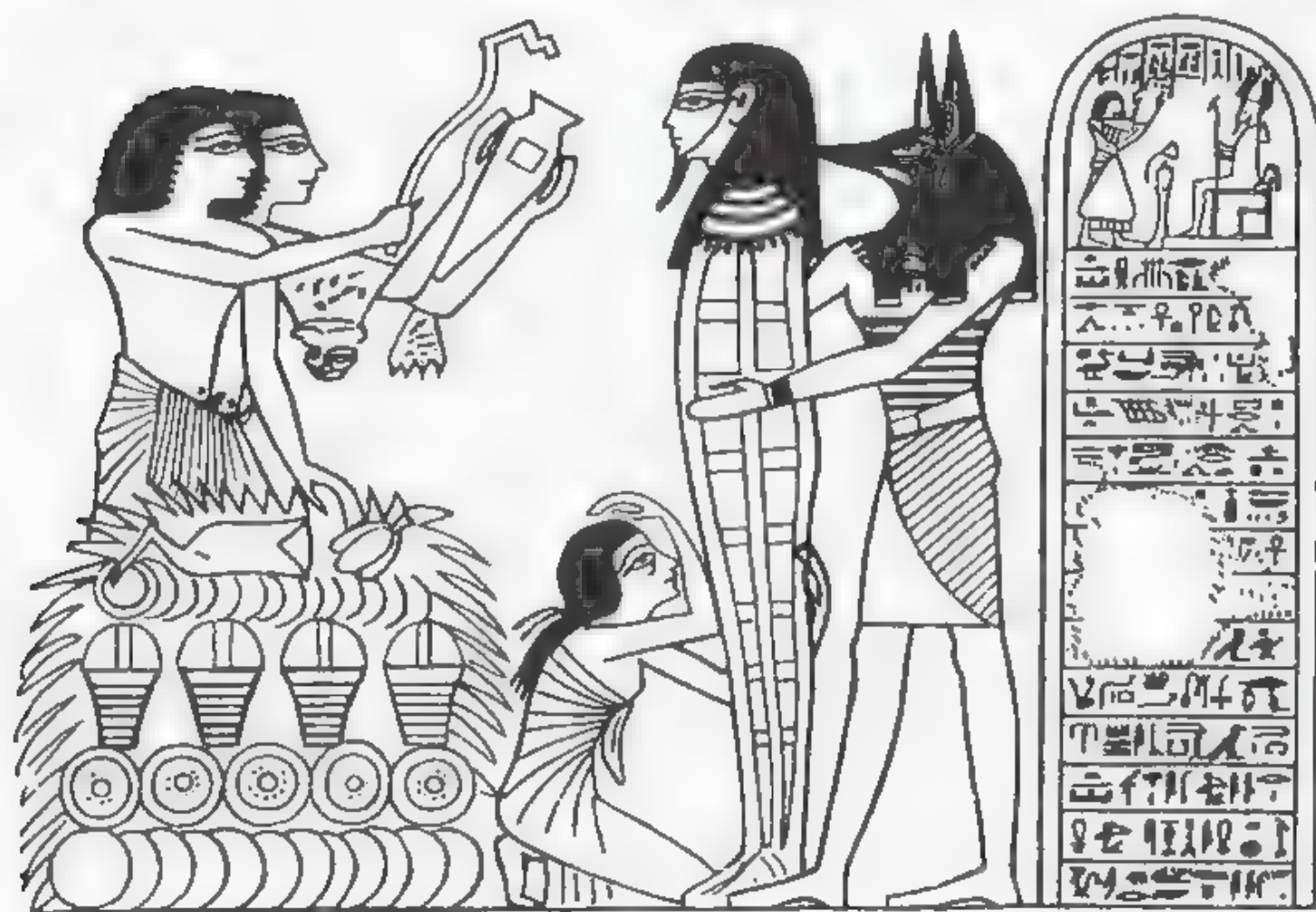
When the children of Israel were able to part Egypt due to the miraculous parting of the Red Sea, the massive armies of the Egyptians who chased them all drowned when the waters of the sea swept back over them. This left Egypt a land of widows, children, and slaves. A woman called Dalukah took over the throne, and undertook to assure the safety of the country by the extensive use of magical figures. She built a huge wall, along which she placed wax sentries shaped like beasts. She had figures formed to resemble marauding soldiers from any and all of the surrounding enemy lands, along with images of their animals. Like Nectanabus, Dalukah performed magic rituals and chanted spells over the figures whenever she heard that an army was advancing on Egypt, causing the figures to be buried underground. Simultaneously, the actual soldiers and beasts would be swallowed by the desert.

Pictures of people or creatures carried power similar to those of three-dimensional images. A drawing of a person could be infused with his spirit and often enemies of Egypt were painted onto the soles of the Pharaoh's, who then stamped on them with every step, thus magically dominating and destroying them. A priest could affect the future by having a draftsman draw a picture of a desired



scene, and using accompanying spells, magically cause the scene to come about in real life.

Many hieroglyphic pictures depict animals such as cobras cut in half or in pieces. It was believed that this would prevent them from coming to life and doing harm. Ivory wands used by the priests were sometimes engraved with pictures of magical beasts in the process of destroying dangerous animals or poisonous insects. The wands were used for protection by drawing a circle in the earth around the threatened person. Women in childbirth could be enclosed in a magic circle to ensure a safe delivery.



Color Magic



The myriad of drawings, etchings, writings, and objects of art which have been preserved since the times of the ancients are stunning not just because of their particular style and uniqueness, but also for their brilliant use of hue and color. We would be mistaken if we assumed the colorful decorations were a matter of taste and esthetics alone, however.

While the ancient Egyptians may have had an eye for beauty, every detail of their creations was carried out with magical intent, and their choice of color was no exception.

The Egyptians believed that color revealed the inner essence of a substance or material. Precious stones and jewels were valued not just for their beauty but for the magic they contained according to their color. When color was added to magic, its power was greatly increased, and objects and materials of a color appropriate to the magic performed were chosen with care. Most of the gods had particular colors associated to them, according to their attributes and powers. A god with no color at all was powerful indeed, since he was inscrutable and therefore difficult to control.



The pigments used in Egyptian magical and religious objects and art were derived from various minerals found in the earth of the Nile delta. These substances were carefully distilled and mixed to form six basic hues.

Red

The most powerful of the colors, red symbolized life itself in the form of the heart and blood, as well as destruction in the form of fire. Red was used to represent the blood of Isis, which was thought of as a powerful protector against just about any form of harm or misfortune.

While red was used in defense against danger, it also symbolized danger itself. Red was associated with the god Seth, and the powers of darkness, anger and chaos he represented. Seth was often depicted with red skin and hair.

White

As it is in most modern religions, white was used in ancient Egypt to denote purity, innocence, and simplicity. White alabaster was used to make the ritual objects used by priests in the temples, and white sandals and garments were worn when performing sacred magic. "Memphis" was the "city of white walls, meaning it was one of the holiest of locations.

Silver was not considered a color itself, but a form of white, and the names for the two were interchangeable. White ivory was used in the creation of ritual objects such as the wands used by priests and magicians when carrying out magic rituals.



Black

Although black was the color for death, it did not have the connotation we might guess. Far from denoting sadness, despair, or nothingness, black in fact represented the after-life, rebirth and resurrection. The black silt which was left behind each year on the banks of the Nile after the flood waters receded was a life-giving gift of nature, and revered and celebrated. Thus the color black came to mean nurturing life force and continuation of vitality. Death, as we will see, did not mean an end for the ancient Egyptians since they harbored no doubt whatever that the dead continued on to an afterlife as rich as the present existence. Osiris was often seen as the black god, since he was presided over the afterlife, but he was a supportive and sustaining god, just as the black Nile mud was sustaining of earthly life. Egypt herself was sometimes represented by black, since the life of the country was identified so strongly with the Nile soil. Geb, God of the Earth was often depicted with black skin.

Blue

Egyptian blue was a rich dark indigo color which was found in the beautiful shimmering semi-precious lapis lazuli stone. Blue was the color for joy and happiness, as well as sky and water. Blue (along with black) was the color symbolizing Nile River and since all of creation was formed from a watery tumult, blue symbolized the birth of the world. The various creation gods were sometimes depicted with blue faces and skin. Pharaohs who were associated with the creation gods were also seen as blue, and various other gods were depicted with blue hair.



Yellow

Not surprisingly, yellow was the color of the solar forces, which were seen as all-powerful and indestructible. Gold was used to fashion images and statues of gods in order to ensure their everlastingness. The Egyptians believed the gods were made of golden bones, and many of the pictures of the gods show them with a yellow glow and gold skin. Yellow was used for magic associated with Ra, the Sun God.

Green

Green inks and pigments were believed to contain the energy of new growth, health, and healing. The powers of green caused crops to flourish and vegetation to be reborn each season their turn. Malachite, a dense green crystal, was used for many green amulets and objects created to promote well-being in the bearer. Green colored quartz and turquoise, though less common, were also used.



Amulet Magic for the Living



Although the ancient Egyptians loved life and lived it with joy, at the same time they perceived their environment as fraught with dangers of all kinds. The gods were believed to be quick to anger and in need of almost constant appeasement in counteraction to their wrath. An angry or capricious god or demon could cause any manner of mischief if not prevented from doing so. Magic was employed to stave off these dangers and to protect from personal harm or injury. Likewise, a bored god, or one that simply wasn't paying attention, might not see to the welfare of a man or woman unless compelled to do so by use of magic. Since it would be cumbersome to haul around pictures and images or to memorize complicated ceremonies to stay safe in everyday life and to assure that things would go smoothly, magic energy was concentrated into small objects which could be worn as ornaments around the neck, carried in a pocket, or fastened onto clothing. These objects are called amulets, from the Arabic word for "to carry". It was extremely common for members of all walks of Egyptian society to carry amulets of various kinds. Even children and infants were adorned with amulets, and it was not unusual for a person to carry or wear several at a time. Amulets were fashioned by



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craftsmen from a variety of materials such as wood, stone, and metal or even rope. The substance used was determined by the type of magic needed, the means of the person ordering the amulet, and as we said, its color. The art of preparing and manipulating metals and other substances for use in magic was well developed and exacting. Alloys and worked materials all had their particular magical attributes. Many amulets were inscribed with magic formulas or drawings, and some of the most powerful were engraved with the names of gods. Sometimes a single powerful magic word would appear. Other amulets were tiny miniature images such as animal forms, or other objects. Usually a priest or magician would chant a prescribed spell over an amulet, consecrating it and imbuing it with power in addition to the power already inherent in the image or formula engraved upon it.

An amulet carried on one's person to bring good luck in a particular aspect of life is called a talisman. In ancient Egypt talismans were used to bring good health, fortune, fertility, and courage, and to insure that the cycle nature and the seasons took place each year uninterrupted. Talismans of various types were carried to increase virility and sexual activity, such as the many phallic figures which have been found where the penis is several times the length of the legs. To protect fertility of the female, natural shells which were in the shape of the genitals were worn as talismans around the pelvis.

Amulets were sometimes made of perishable materials such as herbs, flowers, and parts of animals. Often the amulet or talisman was fastened to the neck of the wearer

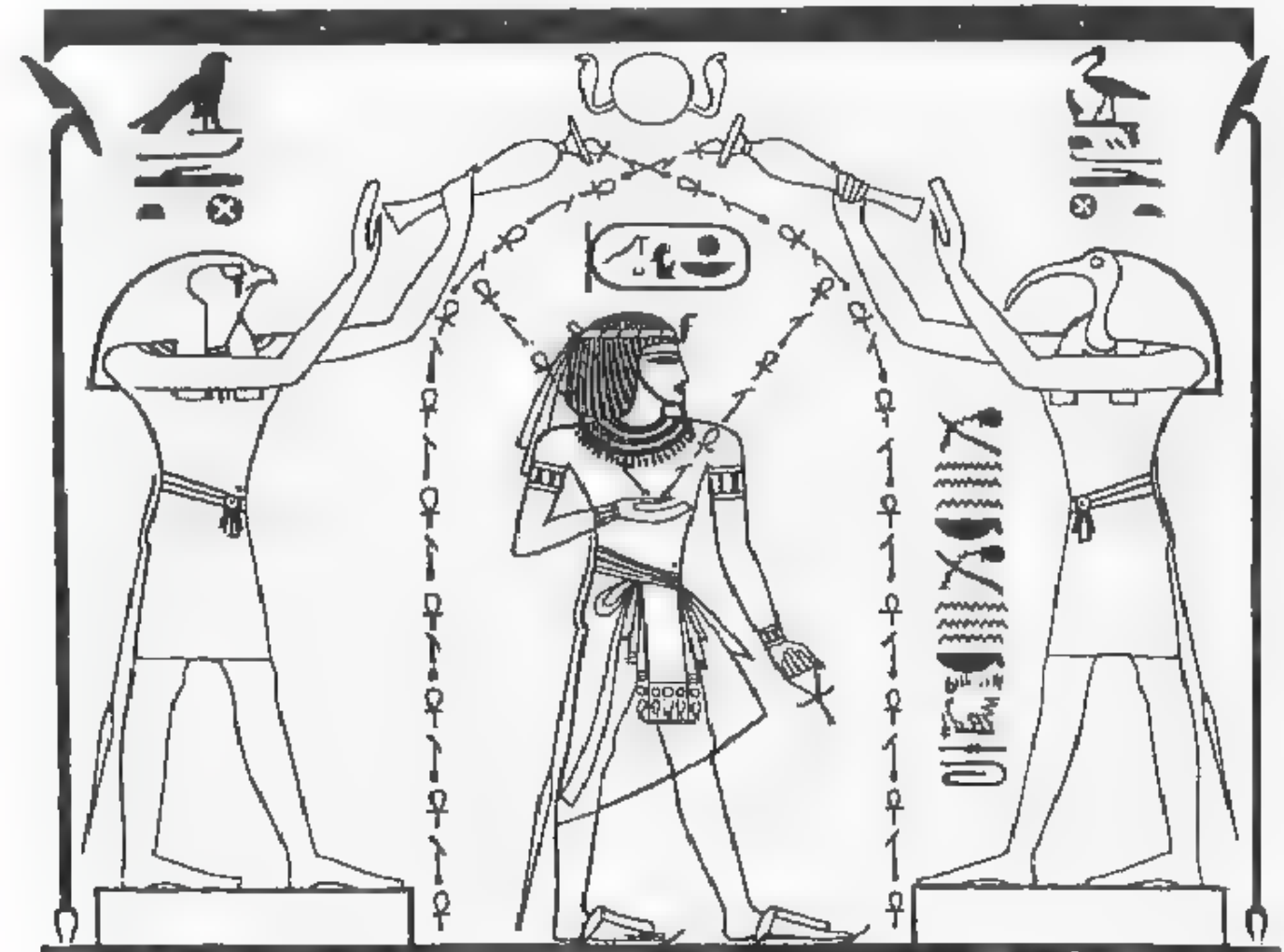
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by means of a knotted cloth or rope. Each knot represented a particular god, and protected the magic in the amulet from opposing energies or magic.

Many Ancient Egyptian amulets and talismans have been recovered in excellent condition. These have been used as models for the manufacture of modern versions which are believed by many to carry the same magical powers in which the ancients held such faith. The following are some symbols used for amulets and talismans which were used by the living in Ancient Egypt and have been adopted all over the world today.

Ankh – A small cross with a loop or circle as its “head”, the ankh was the symbol for the creation of life, the great source of all that is. The loop at the top symbolized eternity, or the mouth, which itself was a symbol for creation.





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Wearing of an amulet with the ankh was said to ensure the vital yearly overflowing of the banks of the Nile River which kept the valley fertile and supportive of life. Kings and gods alike wore this symbol around their necks as pendants to ensure the continuation of their creative powers.

Two Plumes – A drawing or etching of two plumes symbolized the relationship between the spiritual and material aspects of life. The gods Ra and Thoth personified this symbol. The two plumes amulet was worn to ensure truthfulness and morality as well as balance.



One Plume – A single plume was used to depict Ma'at, the Goddess of Justice. It was worn to promote integrity and righteousness in all interactions.

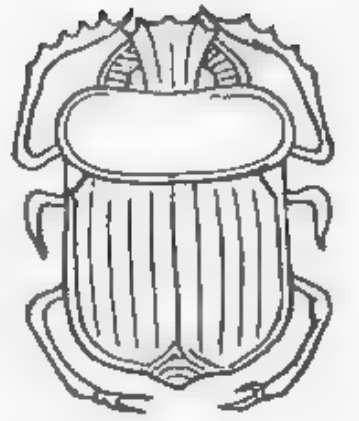


Nefer – The nefer was a very popular amulet worn to attract joy, good luck, and success. It symbolized vitality, energy, and ambition. Usually red in color and made of stone or porcelain, the nefer was worn around as a pendant.

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Scarab – By far the most commonly worn and popular amulet, the scarab was worn next to the heart to ensure longevity. The scarab is a beetle indigenous to Egypt, which due to its habit of rolling its eggs into balls symbolizes rebirth and the rising sun.



Scarab amulets were fashioned of basalt, marble, glass and porcelain in dark colors such as deep green, metallic gray, and black. Some carried the image of the scarab, while others were tiny scarab statues.



Eye – An amulet or talisman with the image of an eye represented the Ra, and his ability to see all.

Eyes of Horus – An eye of Horus amulet was commonly carried by Egyptians during their everyday life. It would contain the image of one or the other of Horus' eyes set above a flowing beard. The image of a white eye symbolized the sun, while a black eye meant the moon. The beard depicted wisdom and kingship. The wearer expected to be protected from danger and to enjoy strength and vigor. The eye of Horus amulets and talismans were made of a variety of substances. Gold and silver were common, but wood and porcelain were also employed. Others have been found from hematite, lapis lazuli and glass.

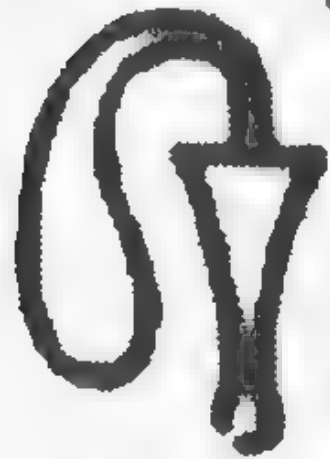




Sma – Worn to strengthen human relationships and foster love and friendship.



Menat – Pharaohs and priests often held the menat amulet in their hands or strung it around their necks in order to ensure the continuation of their magic abilities. It represented bodily strength and health of the male and female reproductive organs.



Tet – The Tet amulet was associated with Osiris, and symbolized a strong back and spine. In the shape of an upright tree trunk, the Tet was a reminder of the hollow tree in which Isis was said to have hidden Osiris body from Seth after recovering it from the depths of the Nile. The wearer would have a strong and upright back and was protected from any injury to that part of his anatomy.



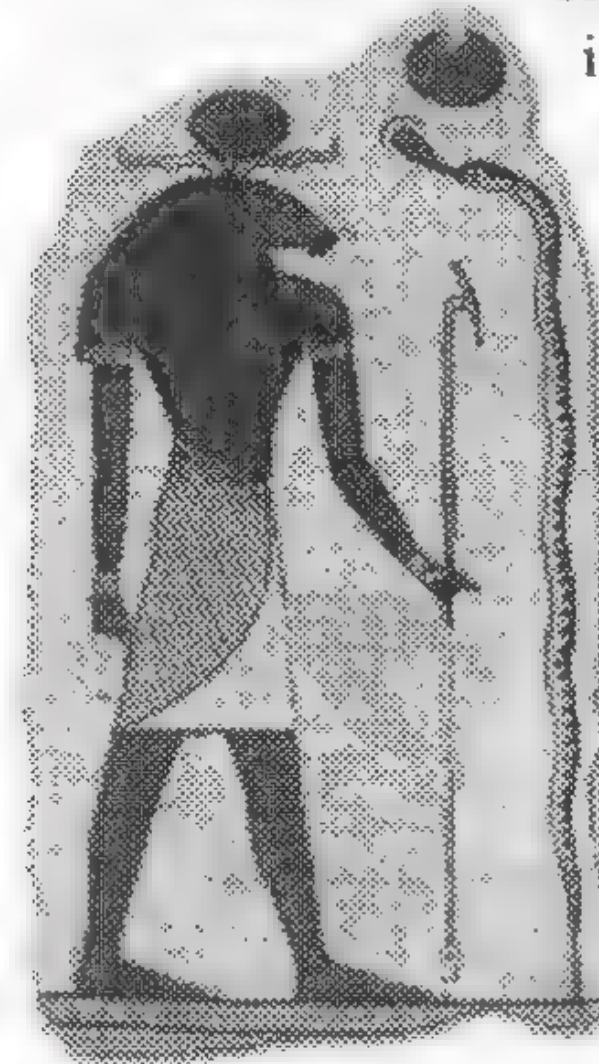
Buckle of Isis – This amulet was not really a buckle, but a representation of Isis' genitalia. It was fashioned from red crystals or stones such as red jasper and carnelian, and sometimes inlaid with a green stone. Gold was sometimes used to cover the red amulet. A very popular amulet among women, the buckle of Isis granted its wearer female vitality and fertility and the motherly wisdom of Isis.



Serpent's Head – The red image of a snake head was often used to stave off the influence of the mythical serpent Apep, which represented evil. Snakes, cobras and serpents of various kinds are important images in Egyptian magic. They alternately represent the danger of Apep and the benevolent power of the gods of the sun and sky. The magical power of Isis was represented by the head of the serpent and often it topped the staff carried by magicians and priests.

Originally, this amulet was a staff with a serpent's head that was placed on the grave or on the corpse mainly in order to prevent live snakes or other predators from approaching the grave. Wealthy people would have these

staves made from precious metals inset with gemstones, while the poor made do with carved wooden staves. The staff was usually painted red. Both the serpent and the color red are symbols of the goddess Isis, and for this reason, it was believed that she would protect the grave.



Over the course of the years, this amulet appeared by the name of "Urhekau" (serpent's head that opens mouths) in various texts that accompanied the dead person on his last journey. In parallel, we find the serpent's head in spells with two main objectives: spells whose aim was to



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compel somebody to speak the truth ("to open his mouth to the spirit of the goddess," as the Egyptian expression goes); and spells whose aim was to restore virility to men who suffered from impotence. The second spell was common mainly among priests.



The serpent's head amulet appears on various items of jewelry and carvings, and was widespread in Europe in the form of a walking stick whose head resembled a serpent's head. This staff was called "the Egyptian staff" by wizards and sorcerers, and was used as a tool by magicians.

Coiled Snake – Used on metal amulets as protection from chaos and to ensure a safe journey to a traveler.

Frog – Another image associated with Isis, the frog was worn to assure the goddess's blessings for fertility, good health, and long life.



Pillow or Headrest – The pillow amulet assured its wearer a swift recovery from ailments, and as a talisman it staved off illness. It was modeled after the stone stand on which the head of the deceased was laid. Made of hematite or other heavy stone, it protected the head and face of its wearer from harm.



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Lotus – The lotus symbolized chastity and purity, but also abundance and enlightened understanding.

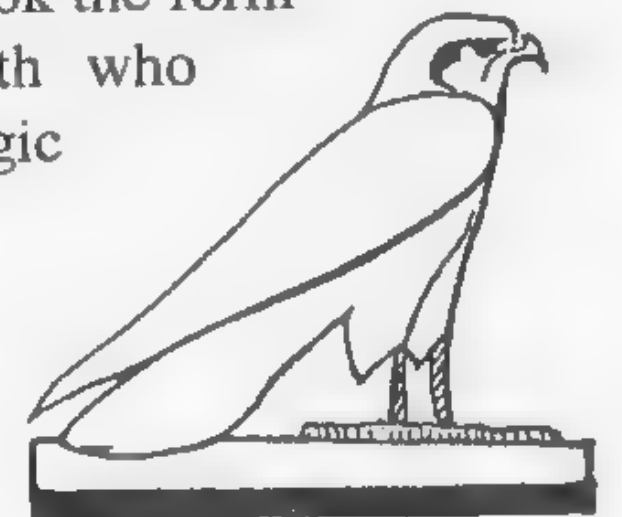


Sekhmet – A talisman with the name of the goddess Sekhmet was said to protect its wearer from disease or pain.

Shen – A simple symbol consisting of a circle resting on a straight horizontal line, the Shen represented the sun rising or setting on the horizon. Worn as a talisman, it insured a long complacent life. The Shen amulet was usually fashioned from a red stone such as carnelian or red jasper.



Vulture – Scorpions were rampant in the lands near the Nile, and were greatly feared. The vulture amulet protected against the scorpion's sting. Myth held that when Horus was a young child he'd been stung by a scorpion and that Isis took the form of a vulture to fly off to Thoth who bestowed on her the life-giving magic words which restored her son. Amulets with the image of Isis as vulture were powerful talismans for protection.





Bes – The name or image of Bes, the God of laughter was depicted on talismans which brought fun and ease to the bearer. Bes was a dwarf sometimes taking the form of a lion. She protected the home and its contents and furnishings.



Taweret – Along with that of Bes, pictures of Taweret, the hippopotamus goddess were sometimes inscribed on furniture or other belongings to protect them from theft or harm.

Thoth – The name or image of the god Thoth would promote truth and order in the life of those who carried it. It would enable the proper use of words of power.



Medical Magic



When a person fell ill in ancient Egypt it was assumed that his ailment was the work of an angry god or other spirit which was hostile to him for reasons known or unfathomable. It fell to those in several occupations to treat a wounded or sick person – the priest, physician and magician would work together in an effort to exorcise the problem. Many temples had small clinics attached to them where physicians could practice in close proximity to the priests. The physician may have been more influential as diagnostician in many cases, where the priest performed the actual cure, using magic. Once the patient was feeling better he would be outfitted with various charms and amulets to insure the continued blessings of the gods for his health.

The ancient Egyptian physician's knowledge of human anatomy was actually quite extensive. Medical and biological treatises have survived which bear witness to deep study of the human body, mostly through autopsies carried out on the deceased. Ancient knowledge of physiology was surprisingly accurate in many respects, but there were a few notable exceptions such as the belief that the brain was a wholly unnecessary mass of gel filling the cranial cavity, and that feces and urine circulated



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continuously in the body along with the blood. Physicians were a learned and respected caste, and they were invariably consulted when illness struck, yet it was not believed that their knowledge alone had the power to bring about a cure. Since the illness was believed to have its origins in divine will, then that will had to be appealed to before a healing could take effect.

This meant that magic was the force behind every cure. Depending on what part of the anatomy was affected, the appropriate gods were called upon to deliver the sufferer by use of incantations, magical rites and ceremonies. The eyes were ruled by Ra/Atum, the creator god who protected the right, or solar eye, and Horus, who protected the left or lunar eye. Geb was called upon for back problems, and Nut for problems in the abdominal area. Isis and Nephthys were the guardians of the thighs, and Shu oversaw the feet. The penis was controlled by Baba, the baboon god.

The goddess Sekhmet was said to control plagues and epidemics, and her lion-headed image was used to ward off dangerous disease and to cure those already infected.

Knowledge of the proper name of the god associated with each ailment was essential to the healing. The sacred books in the House of Life contained numerous names for each god which the magicians and priests would chant in secret hoping to release healing power for the patient. Another strategy was for the physician to take on the identity of a god and act out a myth in which a miraculous cure had taken place. Reenacting the story of the wounded eye of Horus, for example, could restore sight to a blinded



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patient, with the physician declaring himself the god Thoth, whose magical knowledge had healed Horus.

The physician could call forth the power of a deity by drawing their images on the patient's body in an edible substance. The patient then licked off the picture, consuming the healing energy of the god. Since illness was sometimes thought to be the work of demons, the patient might be surrounded by dung or a rotting substance which would attract the demon and so exorcise him from the patient's flesh. Conversely, using something sweet, such as honey, was believed to repel the demon and thwart its ability to possess a person's body tissue.

Physicians might be called upon to perform surgery or administer a treatment with a potion or salve. These were





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considered secondary to the magic, however, and were never used alone. The treatment for burns offers a characteristic example of the meshing of the tasks of the physicians, magician-priests, and gods in bringing about relief for the patient. The salve used to sooth a burn consisted of human milk (only the milk of a women who had recently born a male infant would do), tree gum, and hair of a ram. The physician would spread this mixture on the burned tissue while the priest recited spells which invoked the name of Isis, beseeching her to heal the patient as she had healed Horus. The words of the spell also call upon the power of the watery elements within the body (urine and saliva) to quench the burn.

This is your burned son, Horus. There is no water in the dessert. The water is in the mouth and between the thighs.

Many treatments were taken from nature in the form of herbs and plants, and human and animal urine and saliva were considered particularly powerful healing substances, both from physical and magical standpoints.

The bark of the willow tree contains an antiseptic agent which was used to avoid infection of wounds and to relieve pain. Images of the willow appeared frequently in Ancient Egyptian art, so we know it was thought of as a valuable plant. Hemp grew plentifully in the Nile delta and had a number of magical and practical uses, one of which was to treat ailments of the eyes by drying it and grinding it into a powder from which an eye wash could be made. From the lotus, a beautiful plant which regularly bloomed in the lakes in the Nile region, a powerful narcotic substance



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could be extracted which was used as a remedy for any number of medical problems. The juice of the blue lotus caused intoxication similar to that of alcohol, and was used to induce euphoria. It also brought down fever and relieved constipation. Sekhmet was sometimes depicted with a lotus-shaped staff in her hand. Coriander and juniper oils mixed into a paste with honey formed a headache remedy when smeared on the forehead of the patient. Onions mixed with beer, remedied constipation. Thyme, mandrake, and many other herbs were also cultivated for use by the ancient physicians.

Among the most commonplace health mishaps in Egyptian life were snake bites and scorpion stings. If the gods decreed, either could be fatal, and the average Egyptian lived in a constant state of anxiety concerning these pests. Countless detailed spells and incantations, as well as numerous prescriptions for use of certain amulets have been found in connection with attacks by these creatures and were doubtless common in every Egyptian household. Treatment for these cases was far more magical than medical. The story of the infant god Horus' cure was commemorated in magical stone pillars in which the images of the players in that myth were carved. By pouring water over these images of Isis, Horus, and Thoth, it was believed that the physician captured the gods' promise that all who suffer would be healed just as Horus was healed. The water which had touched the carved pillar and imbued with the power of the gods was given to the patient to drink or used to wash out his wounds. This spell accompanied the treatment:



Flow out poison! Spill yourself onto the earth! Horus conjures you and Horus spits you out, and you fall down. You are not strong, you are weak. You are a coward who does not fight back. Turn back, serpent! The magic of Horus prevails against you! Flow out! Fall on the ground...



Calendar Magic and Prophecy



For the Ancient Egyptians, fate was sealed at birth. They believed the gods had already ordained the way a life would pan out and had fixed the time, place, and circumstances of death. As with everything else, however, magic powerful enough, and magicians knowledgeable enough, could convince the gods to alter the outcome. In order to do so or even to wish to, knowledge of what a person's fate was to be needed to be obtained. Only certain of the most accomplished magicians and sages were believed to have the ability to divine the future. Exacting knowledge of the stars and planets and their positions was vital, and an understanding of the calendar was essential to making the best of a pre-fated existence.

It was said that a newborn child's fate could be prophesied according to the sound of his first cries. If he cried "NEE" he would live a long life. If he wailed "BA", he was doomed.

Several prominent stories attest to the Egyptian belief in predetermined destiny. In the first, several goddesses attended the rare birth of a set of triplets. As each infant



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emerged, the goddesses announced "he shall be king!" The three indeed grew up to become the Pharaohs of the fifth dynasty.

Another famous myth tells of the Seven Hathors standing by as the wife of a king labored with their long awaited child. The birth produced a healthy boy, but the goddesses declared that before he grew up the infant would meet his death either at the jaws of a crocodile, a serpent, or a dog. The child indeed had near escapes from a crocodile and a serpent, but just when his parents began to believe he might escape his prophesied fate, he was bitten by a dog, and died.

Nectanabus, the self-exiled king who became advisor to the Macedonian court stood at Olympia's bedside as she labored with the birth of Alexander the Great. Nectanabus held a calendar with the most auspicious hour marked on it, and prevented Olympia from expelling the child from her body until the hour was reached which was favorable to the birth of a powerful leader. Due to his intervention, Alexander was born at a moment which made him destined for greatness.

Though a person's ultimate fate was pre-determined, it was believed that one could manipulate relative success and happiness by taking heed of the calendar and performing or abstaining from certain actions according to its wisdom. The calendar was an elaborate system of lucky and unlucky days and hours, based on the myriad myths and legends concerning the lives of the gods.



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Each day was divided into thirds, so that a day could be completely lucky, completely unlucky, one third lucky and two thirds unlucky, or one third unlucky and two thirds lucky. The particular hours were also specified as either lucky or unlucky. Priests and magicians were often called upon for "calendar readings" when advice was needed on when to undertake a particular project or journey. The calendar was very specific in its prohibitions and recommendations. A few examples:

The 26th day of the month of Paophi was an auspicious day for beginning the plans for a new dwelling.

On the 5th day of the month of Hathor it was forbidden to kindle any fire within the home.

On the 16th day of the month of Hathor no music or joyful singing was allowed, since this was the day Isis was said to have wept for Osiris.

The 26th day of the month of Thoth was completely unlucky. Set and Horus began their legendary fight on that day, and it raged for three days and nights while the antagonists changed form from men to bears and ferociously tore at one another. Isis came momentarily to Set's aid when she saw that Horus was getting the better of him, and in response, Horus decapitated her. Seeing this, Thoth stepped in, and by using words of power, replaced her head with that of a cow. These events were so momentous as to deem this day one of prayer and rest for all time, with no work being done or anything new begun.



Animal Magic



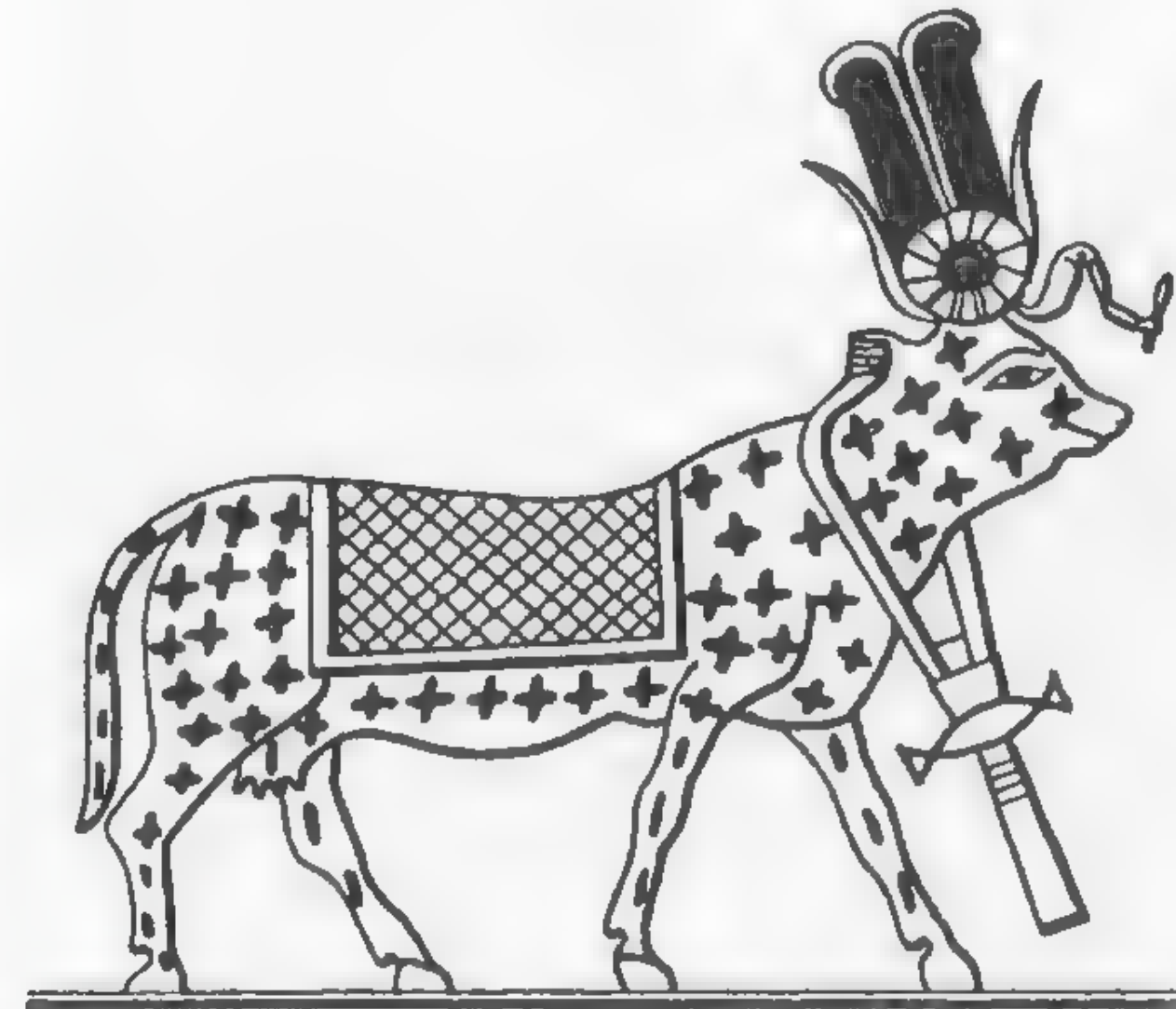
Animals played a vitally important role in the ancient Egyptian religion and magic. It must be emphasized however, that animals were not worshipped as gods or divine creatures themselves. Rather, they were seen as representative of certain divine attributes. It was believed that the gods used the animals to manifest their desired actions on earth. A god could transform himself into an animal, or infuse his will into an animal.

“Sacred animals”, then, were not themselves worshipped, but were kept near the temples to make it easier for the gods to avail themselves of their services. Flocks of falcons were often kept, representing Horus, and ibises, for the god Thoth. Many of these animals would be mummified upon their death, just as carefully as were the bodies of humans. Animal mummies have been recovered in the millions from tombs and burial grounds throughout Egypt. By honoring the corpse of the animal which represented a particular god, the god himself was honored. When offering a mummified animal, often specific supplications to the gods were given at the same time, so that the animal became a sort of sacrifice. Animals may have been raised for the purpose of having them on hand when gods were petitioned with specific requests.



Private homes kept animals as well, both as pets and as representatives of the gods. Snakes, cats, birds, dogs, and many other animals were kept in homes and buried ceremoniously when they died.

Bulls were thought to be manifestations of the god Ptah. The bull was said to be able to give information in the form of yes or no answers. A black bull with white markings in its tail and forehead would be kept at the temple for oracles. When this bull died, a period of mourning would be observed, and the embalming and burial of the bull was extremely elaborate.





Magic for After-Life



Life in Ancient Egypt was lived to its fullest and love of living abounded. It has been said, however, that the ancient Egyptians were extremely preoccupied with death. In actuality, their preoccupation was not so much with death as with the continuation of life. The demise of the physical form was seen only as a point along a continuum of eternal life – not an ending but a beginning – one that opened up infinite vistas of new experience in the afterlife.

Ample voluminous material has been preserved which makes modern man privy to the immense body of ancient beliefs surrounding the phenomenon of life after death of the body. Egypt has been an archeological wonderland that has offered up a vast array of artifacts for our examination and study. The ancient tombs have provided collections of objects, drawings, mummies, and most importantly perhaps, numerous written treatises stating exactly what was believed about life after death. The Egyptian Book of the Dead, the Coffin Texts, and various other writings have laid out in great detail the complex system of magical rites and practices surrounding physical death and the continuation of life everlasting.



During the reigns of the earliest Pharaohs, only members of the royal families themselves were believed worthy or capable of immortality. The Pharaoh employed a full bevy of people whose sole occupation was the preparation for the passing of the royals. Wealthy citizens later joined their ranks, and they too made the elaborate preparations deemed necessary for eternal existence. As time passed however, beliefs changed, and it became possible and expected that even the poorest and commonest of Egyptians would achieve life everlasting. The rich and royal of course had the means to order fancier and more decorated tombs and more expensive accoutrements with which to be buried, but the poor were provided the minimum treatment thought to assure their passing over to and subsistence in the next world.

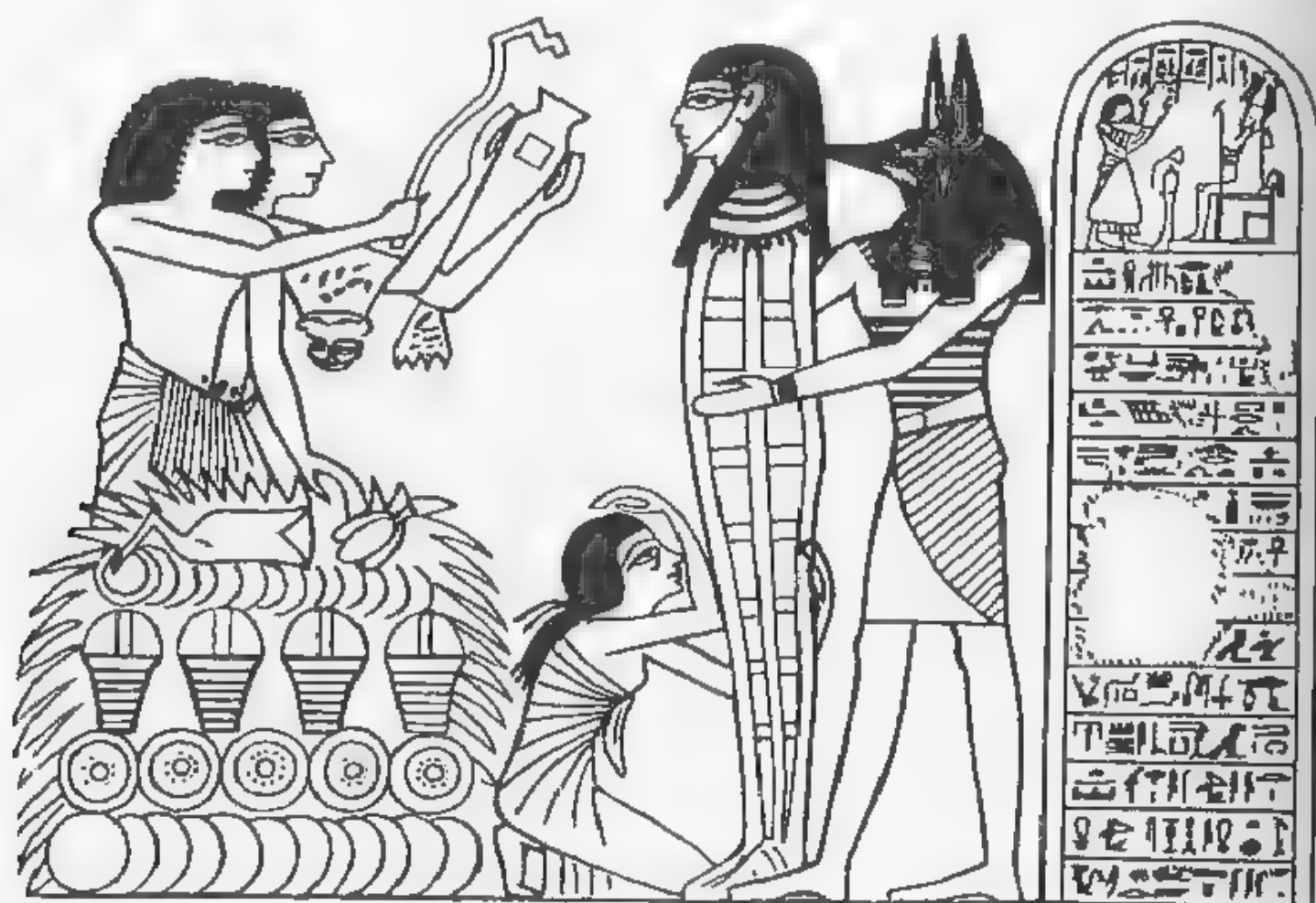
Rich or poor, it was not simply a given that the dead would rise and live on. Nothing could be further from the truth. Magic played the major role in the funerary practices and in fact, without complex and systematized magic being performed in the here and now, the end of the human body would indeed mean the end of life. It is because of the elaborate and time-consuming magical arrangements that needed to be attended to that we have the impression of the Egyptian preoccupation with death. It was firmly believed that the living controlled what happened to the dead, either to their benefit or their detriment. Precise efforts were needed to preserve the body and to provide all that the person would need for an eternity. This was certainly a burdensome responsibility and an extremely complex knowledge of magic was required to carry it out.



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Since the ancient Egyptians could not conceive of life without a physical body, the body itself was preserved using the exacting process of mummification. The mummy was entombed along with everything it would need in the afterlife, including tools for its occupation, food, and anything else deemed necessary for a comfort and pleasure. Magic, of course, would ensure that the body itself, along with all of these objects, would be usable and eternal.

To understand completely the Egyptian belief that life could continue indefinitely, we need to take a look at the rather confusing concept of the soul in ancient Egyptian religion. While man lived in his physical body, he already had a "parallel self" called the Ka, which existed as a sort of higher consciousness, guiding the physical man in his earthly existence. The Ka patiently awaited reunification with the rest of the person's soul after death of the body,



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when it would reside eternally in the tomb. Also within the living individual was the Ba, a concept more closely linked perhaps to what we might today call the soul, or the spiritual self. At the moment of death, the Ba was released from the body and took flight in the form of a bird with a human head. The Ba would hover around the deceased in its tomb by day, and at night it would fly the heavens with the celestial gods. The third aspect of the spirit released at death was the Akh, the part of the person which lived on in nature, as a river, a stone, or in the case of the most influential of humans, perhaps as a star or some other non-terrestrial body. The Akh contained the intellect, the personality, and the sum of the deeds of the deceased, and was allowed eternal existence if it succeeded in the judgment of the gods after death. The Ren or "true name" of the deceased had to accompany him throughout his journeys in the afterlife. Any tampering with the true name by magic on earth or elsewhere could harm his eternal being.

Each of these parts of the soul of man had to be kept safe and was supported in the carrying out of its tasks by the use of magic. If successful, the magic would propel the deceased to the hereafter, or underworld. The underworld was believed to be a rich and wonderful place which in large part could be controlled by man on earth, through, of course, magic.



Mummy Magic



While the ancient Egyptians recognized the fact that the physical body would perish and was capable of quickly decomposing and essentially disappearing, they believed it their task to halt and prevent this decay so that the deceased would have use of his body in the hereafter. Life in the underworld was believed to closely mirror that on earth, with the possible exception of certain pesky earthly realities such as disease and pain. The physical body was a necessity there just as always, since the five senses would be necessary to enjoy life, and the musculature to move around and function. The deceased would continue to eat, drink, walk, dance, and work, just as he had in his earthly form, provided his body and soul were properly looked after with magic. Without the body, the Ren, Ba, Akh, and ka would cease to exist. Preservation of the body after physical death was therefore deemed vital to the welfare of the deceased. Indeed, the process of mummification was tantamount to reviving the dead, as Osiris had been magically revived when after he was dismembered by Seth he was put back together and wrapped up tightly with cloth.

Mummification was not a simple and straightforward process, even though people died with regularity and it



came to be an “everyday” occupation! We might think of mummification as embalming, wrapping, and storing of the body, and indeed these were involved, but each was a complicated series of steps steeped in magical rites and intent. The entire process took seventy days from the time of death. One envisions a sort of mummy assembly line with many bodies in the various stages of mummification at any given time.

Directly after death, the body was brought to the embalming house where it was entrusted to the priests who worked as embalmers. The chief embalmer would wear the mask of a jackal to attract the powers of Anubis, the God of Mummification. They began by removing the parts of the anatomy which tend to decay quickly. The brain was taken out through the nasal passage by use of a slender wire with a hook at the end. The brain was not thought to have any particular significance so it was simply discarded, as were the eyes, which were replaced by clay or jeweled models. It was believed that thought and intelligence, and indeed a person’s very essence were housed in the heart, so this organ was usually left in place and mummified within the body. The other internal organs such as the liver, stomach, kidneys, intestines and lungs were removed through an incision made along the left side of the body from the neck to the groin and carefully rinsed with oils of myrrh and frankincense. The empty abdominal and chest cavities were then stuffed with cloth sacks containing a mixture of salts called natron. The incision was closed and stitched tightly, and a bronze plate with the eye of Horus etched into it was placed on the wound to magically heal it.



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The body was then covered with salt which would draw out any moisture and left on a slanted stone slab to completely dehydrate. Total drying was essential to the preservation of the body and the prevention of decay. The organs which had been removed were also covered in salt and left to dry. This process could take up to forty days, during which the body would shrink considerably with the loss of fluid and moisture.

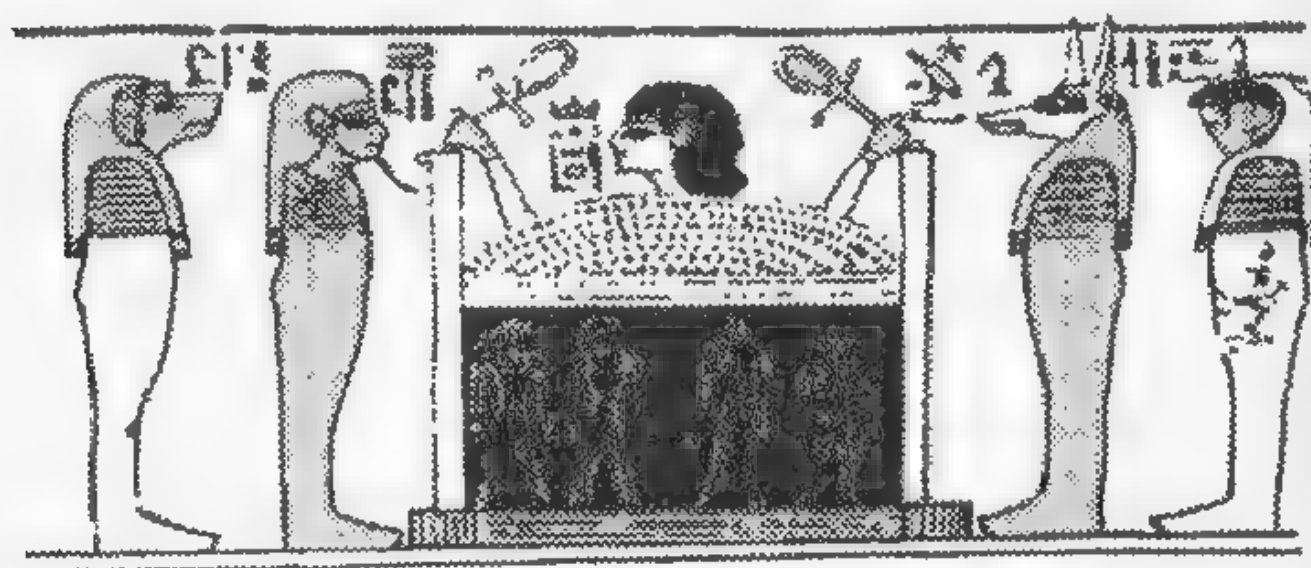
The four major organs were kept separately in small vessels called canopic jars. Each jar was topped with the image of one of the four sons of Horus who protected the organs on their journey to the next life.

Duamutef, the jackal headed god – protected the stomach. In cases where the heart was removed from the body, it was mummified separately and placed in a special jar which was charged to the protection of this god as well, until such time as it would be needed by the person in the afterlife.

Qebehsenuf, the falcon-headed god – protected the intestines.

Amset had a human head, and protected the liver.

Hapi, the baboon-headed god, protected the lungs.



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Canopic jars of various materials have been found – porcelain, wood, ceramic, stone, and marble were all common. The jars were always carefully buried along with the mummy. Sometimes the dried organs were replaced within the deceased body before wrapping, and in these cases the jars were left empty but still used as an essential part of the burial ritual so that the gods could carry out their protective function. It was believed that the body would be magically reunited with its parts when entering the underworld, just as Osiris was magically reassembled after dismemberment. The four sons of Horus were important also since each was said to control one of the four corners of the world. In order to ensure the deceased freedom to come and go in any part of creation, he would need to be in the good graces of these gods. Recitation of words of power over the canopic jars would magically put the deceased under the gods' protection.

When drying was complete, the body was quite wrinkled and leathery, and the priests would anoint it with oils to soften its texture. They also rubbed the dried body with wine, which we now know would have prevented any stray bacteria from taking hold. It was important that the gods and deceased members of the mummy's family be able to recognize him in the underworld, so care was taken to restore the appearance which the deceased had during life. In order to get the head and face to their original shape, the cranial cavity was stuffed with cloth soaked in oil. Perfumes and aromatic oils were also applied so that the body would have the "aroma of the gods". The perfuming was accompanied by more ceremony and magic words evoking the particular gods that the deceased might like to emulate.



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When the deceased was completely dried and anointed, it was time to wrap it up. Many hundreds of yards of linen strips were used to carefully bind the mummy from head to foot, wrapping with a slow and painstaking circular motion from side to side or in repeating geometrical patterns. During the wrapping, various amulets were placed between the strips, and sometimes magic words were written on the linen itself. When the face had been lightly bandaged a special mummy mask was placed over it and the wrapping continued, securing the mask in place. At several stages during the wrapping, a warm resin mixture was poured over the mummy to secure the work.

Wrapping of the mummy's hands was notably exacting and time consuming and the rituals involved in embalming of the hands were long and numerous. The cloth used to wrap the left hand was decorated with pictures of the gods Isis and Hapi. The right hand bandages had figures of Ra and Amsu. The fingers were carefully and ceremoniously wrapped individually. The same treatment was given to the toes and feet, with pictures of jackals, to represent the god Anubis, drawn on the cloth of the right foot, and Horus on the left.

If the deceased was male, his phallus was afforded the same meticulous separate binding as the hands.

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Mummy Amulet Magic



We should pause here and examine the magical objects which were attached to the mummy during the process of wrapping. A mummy might be buried with as many as 100 amulets, each with its important role to play in the magic which would assure the deceased a joyous afterlife. The amulets were carefully chosen and often amassed before the death of the person, with an eye to assuring a satisfactory lifestyle in the hereafter. The gods would thus be compelled or at least reminded to use their powers to provide what was needed for the deceased. Powerful magic surrounding these beliefs, and the use of amulets was among the most important of rituals in this regard. Most of the amulets were attached to the mummy at various stages of mummification, but amulets were sometimes placed within the body cavity as well. Some were placed around the mummy's neck, while others were laid between the layers of bandages during the wrapping and secured with resin.

Each body part and organ was protected by at least one amulet. The amulets varied in size from the tiniest figures of only a centimeter or two, to large heavy plates of metal or stone. Some of the amulets were similar or identical to those worn by the living, but many were prepared especially for magic needed by the deceased.



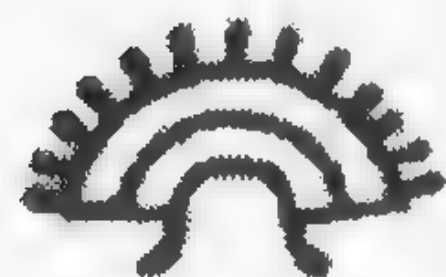
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Amulet of the Soul

A golden amulet in the shape of a hawk with a human head was placed on the breast of the deceased along with chanting of spells which would cause the gods to allow the Ba and Akh to reunite in the afterlife and cause unification of the soul and the body.



Collar of Gold



The most imposing of the mummy amulets was the collar of gold, many of which have been preserved and photographed, making them one of the most recognizable of the ancient Egyptian artifacts. The golden collar has even been copied by jewelers around the world in almost infinite stunning designs. The collar consisted of bars of gold, up to twelve inches in length and several inches in width, strung together so that they formed a necklace resembling emanating rays of the sun. Between the golden bars there might be ornaments made of other materials such as lapis lazuli or silver. The collar's purpose was originally to provide a tool for the mummy to tear open his bandages when the time came for him to be liberated in the underworld, and it later was used also to protect the throat and neck tissue from harm. The ornate collar was worn by the mummy next to the skin, attached by the priests before wrapping along with spells invoking the name of the god Geb.

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Scarab Amulet

The scarab beetle symbolized not only the cycle of life, but the afterlife as well. Scarab images and amulets accompanied the deceased in greater numbers than any other, and virtually nobody was buried without at least one of these little mascots. It was believed that they were the powerful vital guardians of the magic of resurrection itself. This tiny creature had enormous powers, and when accompanied by the proper magic spells, could be of great help to the spirit when it stood judgment at the gates to the afterlife. The scarab's dung ball, into which the beetle rolls its eggs from east to west in the heat of the day, symbolized the movement of the sun across the heavens, believed to be controlled by the god Khepri, who was depicted in the image of a scarab. The eggs within the ball symbolized the potential for rebirth; just as the mummy was thought to contain the germ of possible resurrection which would emerge if the proper magic was applied. Most of the scarab amulets were made of green, black, or metallic grey, colors which represented life due to their resemblance to the mud of the Nile River. Almost every conceivable material was called into service for their manufacture and scarabs have been found made of marble, clay glass, porcelain, granite, and basalt as well as more precious substances. Some of the amulets are shaped into the form of the scarab, while on others the scarab is painted or etched into the surface. Gold was used to gild some of the scarabs, and sometimes the gold was engraved with words of power or the names of gods. The sun-god Ra was said to travel across the sky in a boat, and the image of the sailing god was sometimes drawn on the scarab's back.

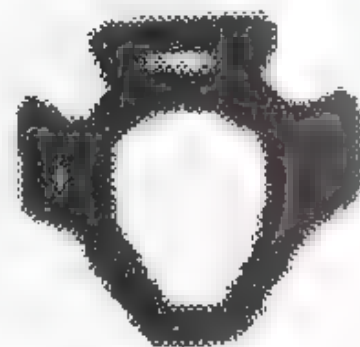




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Heart Amulet

While the brain was seen as a completely useless pile of mucus, it was believed that there could be no life in the hereafter without the heart, which housed the very spirit and being of the deceased. Special amulets were placed in the area of the body which housed the heart (if it had been removed for mummification) or on the breast above the heart, to preserve its vitality and power. The heart amulet was usually made of lapis lazuli or carnelian, stones believed to carry particularly potent magical powers, and inscribed with various prayers and spells meant to please the gods.



Scarabs, too, were frequently etched into the heart amulet, as the scarab, among its other powers was said to be guardian of the heart.

Ankh Amulet

The ankh symbolized life, and is thought by some to be a phallic representation.

Made of almost any substance, the ankh was worn as a pendant amulet around the neck of the mummy, presumably as more assurance of life everlasting.



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Buckle of Isis

The red amulet representing the loins of Isis was vital to supply the deceased with strength and to guard him from harm. It was made in red, to symbolize the blood of Isis, and could be fashioned from red jasper, carnelian, or red glass. Before laying it on the body, the priests performed a prescribed magical ceremony to infuse the amulet with power. Special flowers were soaked in water, and the amulet was dipped into this charged mixture while secret spells were recited. The "buckle" was fastened onto the mummy's neck, before the golden collar was put in place. This amulet would provide the deceased with the ability to move about freely and with vigor in the underworld.



Pillow Amulet

While the brain, as we have said, was not considered a necessary asset, the head was indeed vital for life in the underworld, perhaps because it provided a base for the face, which allowed recognition of the deceased by the gods and others. The head therefore had to be protected with special magic and with amulets depicting the tools used in such magic. The pillow amulet was made in the shape of a small pedestal with a cupped surface at the top, mirroring the shape of the stand the head of the mummy rested upon in the coffin. The pillow was made of gray hematite or other heavy stone, and protected the head from being carried off by predators or enemies by keeping it firmly attached to the body of the deceased.





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Vulture Amulet

The myth of Isis' taking the form of a vulture for the protection of the child Horus was a major one in ancient Egyptian consciousness and the image of Isis as vulture was revered and commonly portrayed in magical objects and pictures. Amulets with the vulture Isis portrayed on them were attached to mummies to magically call forth the power of Isis who would protect the deceased with her outstretched wings.



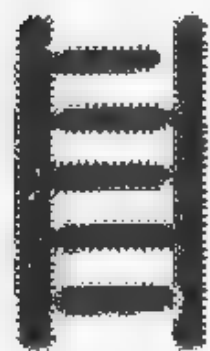
Amulet of the Papyrus Scepter

One of several amulets which represented the power of the goddess Isis, the papyrus scepter amulet was placed on the chest of the deceased before burial. It was made in various shades of green to symbolize youth, vigor, and continued growth in the afterlife. Spells were chanted over the mummy invoking the god Thoth who would see that the deceased' body would not be injured, damaged, or decayed.



Ladder Amulet

While the afterlife supposedly took place in the "underworld", it was thought that to get to the hereafter one had to climb into heaven, which existed on a huge iron plate hanging above the earth. To facilitate the climb, a ladder was sometimes necessary to help the deceased. Myth held that when Osiris tried to clamor into heaven he had a bit of trouble and had to be assisted by his son Horus and the god Ra, who brought a ladder for Osiris to climb.



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Ladder images and amulets were placed on the mummy as a reminder to the gods to provide the real thing should the deceased have the need. Horus was the god associated with the ladder, and was depicted as a guard who held it up while the deceased made his way to the top.

Tet Amulet

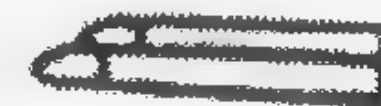
Many mummies were buried with their left hands grasping amulets of Tet which were thought to protect their backbones and spines and ensure their rising up strong and stable in the afterlife. The Tet was usually made of wood, in



remembrance of the tree trunk in which Isis hid the body of Osiris. A special ceremony accompanied the laying of the Tet on the deceased. The priests dipped the amulet into water in which special flowers had been steeped in order to bestow it with the powers necessary to bring the body back to its former strength and upright stance and placed it in the left hand while chanting magic spells and prayers. It was believed that the performance of this ritual and the holding of the Tet by the mummy would assure the spirit a sturdy body in which to function in the next world.

Two Fingers Amulet

Often placed within the body cavity before the closing of the incision were amulets representing the index and middle finger of a hand attached along their length. Usually made of obsidian or hematite, the fingers would magically give the deceased a bit of a push up the ladder into heaven, just as Horus had helped his father Osiris.





Amulets of the Eye of Horus (Utchat)



A commonly found amulet, the eye of Horus could depict either the white right eye, which represented the sun, or the black left eye of the god, which represented the moon.

Serpent's Head Amulet

Just as snakes were perceived as a ubiquitous threat on earth, it was assumed that they were just as ominous in the underworld. Thus some sort of protection for the deceased against the venomous creature had to be applied to the mummy in the form of an amulet. Small serpent's head amulets made of carnelian, jasper or glass, usually in the color red, were placed on the body during wrapping to call forth the magic of Isis and scare away any snake that may take it in mind to attack.

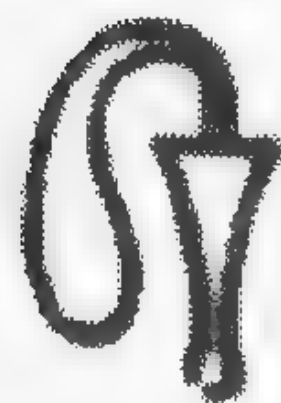


Sam Amulet

Shaped roughly like the reproductive organs of either sex, the sam was made of blue or gray stone, and attached among the mummy's bandages. It represented the sexual pleasure the deceased would attain in the afterlife.



Menat



A menat amulet was often put into the hand of the deceased as if he held it while his body was wrapped. It would bring the soul joy and strength in the afterlife along with continued nutrition and sustenance. The menat amulet was made of bronze, porcelain, or stone.



Shen Amulet

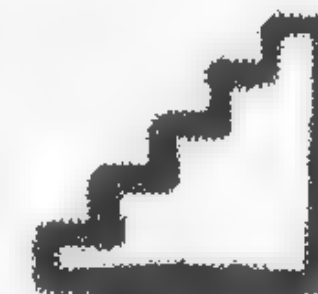


Shen amulets of lapis lazuli or carnelian were placed on the body to represent the continuation of life and the inevitability of the sun's rising again and again. Symbolizing the sun's orbit, it would call forth, as did the scarab, the power of the god Ra.



Staircase Amulet

Small models of a flight of stairs were attached to the legs of the mummy to ensure his ability to climb up to heaven, in similar manner to the ladder. The steps also symbolize those used by Shu when he boosted Nut up so that she might create the sky. The steps might also have symbolized the throne on which Osiris sat when he greeted the dead before judgment.



Nefer Amulet



Just as it did for the living, the nefer would bring its deceased wearer good luck, success and happiness. It was usually worn strung with beads as a necklace.



Magic for Tombs and Burial



When the mummy was fully wrapped and ready it was placed in a coffin which had been carefully painted and decorated by artists and scribes. Magical scenes, words of power, and special hieroglyphic symbols colorfully adorned the coffin. The more elaborately colored coffins denoted persons of highest status in society, but virtually all coffins were decorated to some degree.

Images of the gods were sometimes painted along the sides of the coffin, as well as pictures of scarabs and other important symbols. Doors were painted on the four sides of the coffin to represent the four directions and their winds. By magically exerting power over the gods who controlled the four winds, the deceased would be able to enter heaven by any of these doors. Osiris and Ra were the gods of the North and South winds, respectively. Isis controlled the West wind and Nephthys the East. Pictures of these gods were painted onto the coffins, along with that of Thoth causing the doors to open.

The inner coffin was shaped roughly like the human body and after the mummy was ensconced in it, an outer, more rectangular and less decorated coffin was brought to



contain it. In the case of an ordinary citizen, these two coffins would suffice. Mummies of wealthy and prominent men and woman might be contained in as many as seven coffins of graduated sized, one placed inside the other. When the final coffin was sealed, the mummy was ready for its funeral and burial in a tomb.

During the seventy days of mummification, the tomb-builders were hard at work preparing for the burial. Since the tomb would house the mummy and all of its belongings while the soul made its pilgrimage to the underworld it had to be built with care and according to exacting specifications. Along with the mummified body, a myriad of magical objects were lowered in the tomb, each with a magical significance of particular importance in the afterlife.

Wood or stone statues depicting the deceased himself were placed in the tomb for the unlikely event that the mummy itself was destroyed. The statues would then be recognized by the gods and could substitute for the original body in the underworld. Important personages were buried with numerous self-images, while the common citizen might have only a few or even none at all. The more images of the deceased that were present in the tomb the greater the assurance that the person would make it to the hereafter. In order to help the deceased attain the attributes of the gods, and to compel certain gods to become his protectors, often a small piece of the deceased's body was mummified and inserted into a statue of his likeness, to which had been fastened likenesses of the god or certain characteristics of



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the god. For example, to obtain the protection of Osiris for the deceased, a part of his flesh might be carefully wrapped and placed into a statue of his own image which held the staffs characteristic of the god. The protection of Isis would be ensured if a vulture head were attached to an image of the deceased. Rolled papyri with prayers to particular gods were sometimes rolled up and placed in the hollows of the statues as well.

Pictures of the daily life the person had led on earth were etched or painted onto the walls of the tomb. Tombs have been uncovered containing pictures of people hunting, practicing their professions or trades, sleeping, eating, and virtually any other activity the person might like to continue to partake of in the afterlife. Pictures of family members drawn on the tomb walls would assure that these loved ones would be reunited with the deceased upon their own deaths. It was believed that everything that was on the walls of the tomb would magically become real after the person had passed judgment of the gods, so the more detail that was provided symbolically or graphically in the tomb, the more fulfilling and comfortable the afterlife would be for the deceased. Since it was believed that the afterlife held out the promise of dreams unfulfilled on earth, people who had suffered disease or poverty could hope that in the next life these conditions would be reversed. A childless woman might be pictured on the walls of her tomb holding and suckling several infants, and a sick, bent man would be pictured upright and vigorous, so that the ideal could come true for the deceased. Pictures of the deceased making sacrifices to the gods and participating in religious rituals were of particular importance since the rituals and prayers

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would be "answered" in the underworld. To ensure that no calamity befell the soul on its way to the afterlife, the following three pictures were provided along with special spells.

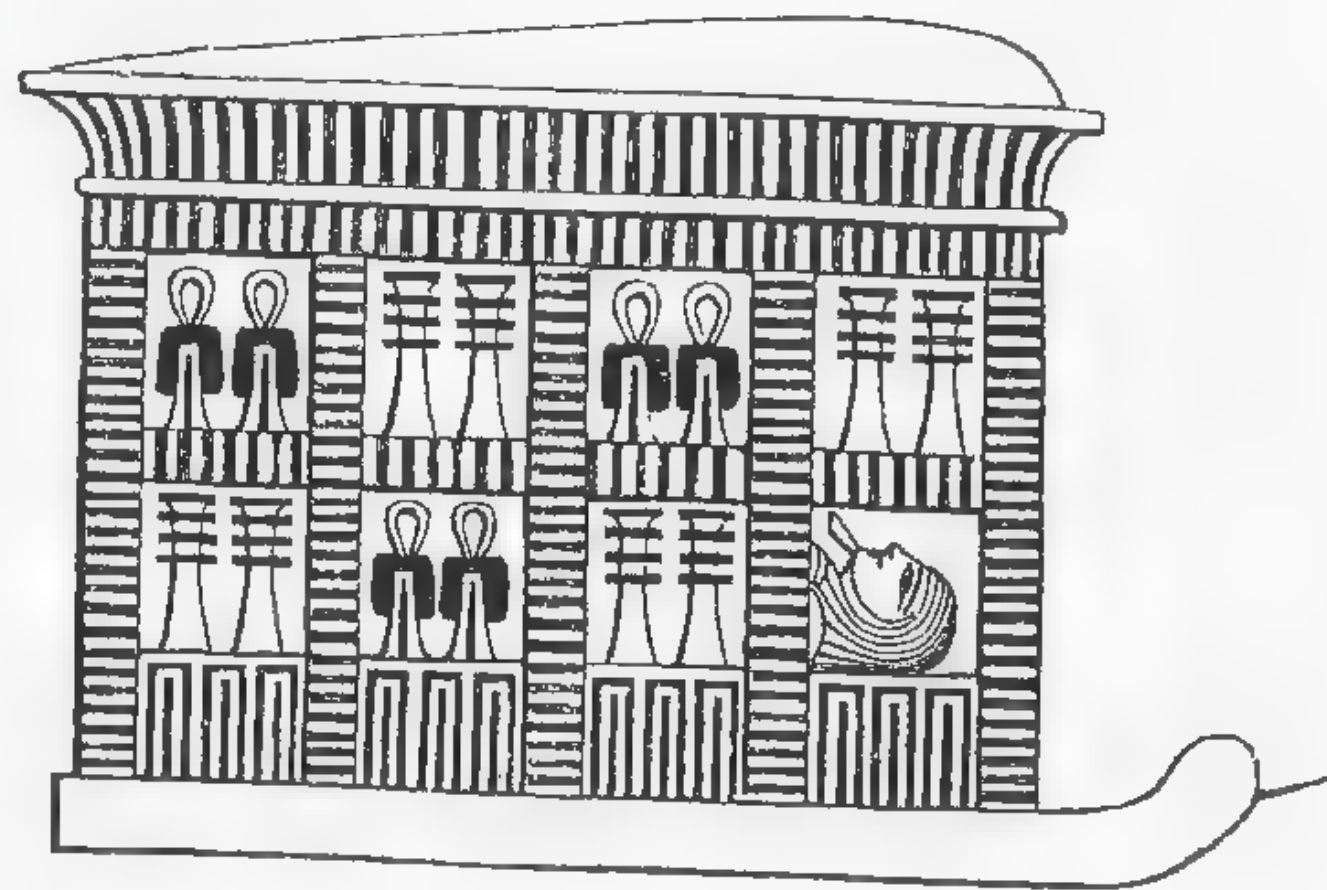
The Eye of Horus with a face of a god with hawk feathers appearing in the pupil.

The Eye of Horus with the face of the goddess Nut with hawk feathers appearing in the pupil.

A serpent standing on legs, with a disk and two horns on its head.

Most tombs contained several vignettes consisting of models of various sorts.

Small models of furniture, cooking utensils, tools, and recreational items were placed near the mummy for his use and enjoyment. If the deceased used make-up and hairdressing implements these might be placed in the tomb,





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as well as articles of favorite clothing and sandals. These could be either the actual items or wax or wooden miniatures which would magically become real when needed. Pictures of all manner of food were carefully etched into the walls of the tomb to ensure the nourishment of the deceased. The food would magically replenish itself as it was consumed, but the ka portion of the soul would be forced to wander outside the tomb and consume inedible and foul substances if there was not sufficient magical food represented within. Detailed drawings and carvings of fruits, loaves, and other food items were depicted as the deceased partook of lavish spreads such as he might hope to enjoy in the afterlife. If the deceased had commanded a bevy of servants in his earthly life, models and statues of these were placed with his mummy so that he could continue to be served in the underworld as appropriate to his station.

It was believed that although the mummy would remain stationary in the tomb, the Ba aspect of the spirit was mobile and would move between the tomb and the afterlife. A false door was placed along the wall of the tomb to facilitate the coming and going of the Ba. A model of a ladder was usually placed against the wall of the tomb near this door which would magically grow to reach all the way to heaven if needed. Since the underworld was dominated by a large river which the gods plied with boats, models of sturdy vessels were placed in the tomb so that the deceased would be assured of eternal transportation on the heavenly waters.

Life in the underworld was not one of idle sloth, but as productive and busy as earthy life. The gods required that work be done in their behalf by all of the inhabitants of the

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afterlife. Crops were grown and harvested, building was done, and tradesmen of all sorts plied their crafts for the benefit of the gods and other inhabitants. There was a way to get out of all this industriousness however. If the deceased had made known his desire to have a stand-in perform his work in the afterlife, magic could be performed which would cause an "ushawabti" or substitute to be employed in his place. The ushawabti was a small image of a man fashioned out of wood which stood under the words of a special magic spell inscribed on the wall of the tomb. Figures of tools and implements with which the ushawabti would work, such as plows, threshers, and hammers, were buried alongside the statue. The magic of the spell was released when the tomb was closed, causing the ushawabti to come to life and attend to the deceased's duties, allowing him to enjoy recreation and rest in the underworld paradise. A prominent or wealthy person might be entombed with several ushawabtis in order to perform as much work as possible for the gods.





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Many of the images buried with the deceased were intended as protection against an attack of Apep, the dreaded serpent monster. Wax figures of serpents with knives in their backs and their tails in their mouths were essential to the protection of the deceased. These serpent figures had faces of cats, crocodiles, ducks, and other animals and were depicted in various circumstances of agony and demise.

Along with the many symbolic objects and images, the tomb was supplied with written materials containing the special spells and formula necessary for the magic to manifest. In many tombs the walls were virtually covered with writings from the funerary texts (often called Pyramid Texts). Coffins too were painted with hieroglyphic writings taken from the texts. The Book of the Dead was usually placed in the tomb in the form of a collection of papyri containing hundreds of spells and magical invocations. These spells were recited by the priests and family members at the funeral, but to ensure the gods did not miss the message, they were entombed with the body as well. Many of the spells were mere clusters of words of power no longer than a sentence, while others were involved treatises of many pages in length.

There were spells to protect each one of the body's organs and functions, as well as each limb and muscle. Some of the spells were to provide protection against disaster like fire or flood, and protected the deceased ability to breath, eat, and speak. It was believed that the mummy would recite many of the spells himself when he came back to life in the form of a spirit on its way to judgment. The

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name of the deceased was inserted at appropriate places in the texts to personalize them for his specific use.

A large portion of the Book of the Dead was taken up with spells intended to overpower Apep. These graphic spells call forth the power of the god Ra to slice the beast's face, dismember its body, bisect its head, and crush its bones. Knowledge of the many names of Apep was also crucial for the deceased, and the list of the serpent's names was a long chapter indeed in the Book of the Dead.





Opening of the Mouth



When all was ready the coffined mummy was brought to the entrance of the tomb in a procession from the embalming house. The procession would cross the Nile River on its way to the tomb even if this was a circuitous route, since the crossing symbolized the trip to the "West" taken by the deceased. Since the sun set every evening in the west, it was believed that the underworld was located in the west, so the ritual crossing over the river from east bank to west. Priests followed the coffin solemnly chanting spells from the funerary texts as the mummy was transported on a barge along with its canopic jars and any personal possessions which would be added to the tomb at the last minute. This entourage was met on the opposite side by the friends and family members who usually gathered to witness the entombment and to send the deceased off to his reward. The mourners, especially women, would rub dust and dirt on their faces and in their hair in a demonstration of sorrow. If the funeral procession was not well-attended, paid bystanders could be enlisted to wail and rent their garments with "grief" that the deceased had departed this world. The larger the crowd at the burial the more honor would be bestowed on the deceased in the next life, so the livelier the funeral the better.



When the procession arrived at the tomb, the coffin was propped in an upright position in a space which had been consecrated for the purpose, or in a small room at the entrance to the tomb, and a priest stood facing it ready to begin the funeral.

It was now time for vitally important Opening of the Mouth to take place. Without this ritual the deceased would be unable to eat and breathe in the afterlife and would perish completely. The ceremony would also restore his ability to speak, making him able to look after himself by reciting the many magic spells with which his tomb was equipped. The Opening of the Mouth ritual was carried out on statues and images as well as on mummies, in order to give them "life", but its origins lay in the need to restore the senses of the deceased that he may fully function in the afterlife. The priest could use various implements to magically open the mouth of the deceased. Usually a metal or wooden blade was touched to the lip area of the mummy while spells calling forth the power of Ra, Thoth and Osiris were chanted. Anubis, it was believed, stood by to receive the mummy into the tomb after the ritual.

The opening of the mouth was considered so powerful a ritual, it was believed possible to bring back the as yet unummified dead temporarily to earthly life using this technique. According to a well-preserved story, the ceremony was used in order to allow a dead man to bear witness to the cause of his death. The man's wife was accused of his murder, but vehemently declared her innocence. In order to solve the crime definitively, priests were called to perform the opening of the mouth. The deceased indeed began to breath, and raising his head,



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inquired as to why his repose had been disturbed. When asked to describe the circumstances of his death, the man pointed to his widow, stating that she had caused his demise by giving him a poisoned drink.

At funerals, about several participants took part in the solemn Opening of the Mouth. A number of priests, one of whom was the official priest of the ceremony and who held a papyrus with the necessary chants and spells, led the ritual. A close friend of the deceased and a son of the deceased (or a substitute if he had no son) would stand near the priests. Women representing the goddesses Isis and Nephthys and persons representing the armed guards of Horus made up the rest of the ceremonial party. Scenes were enacted by these people in which stories of Osiris' death, mummification and burial were represented. As the stories were played out, water from four different containers was sprinkled around the mummy. The containers represented the four corners of the earth. Incense was burned in four holders, and the sweet smelling smoke passed in front of the deceased' nose. The water and the incense allowed the deceased use of his head and heart in



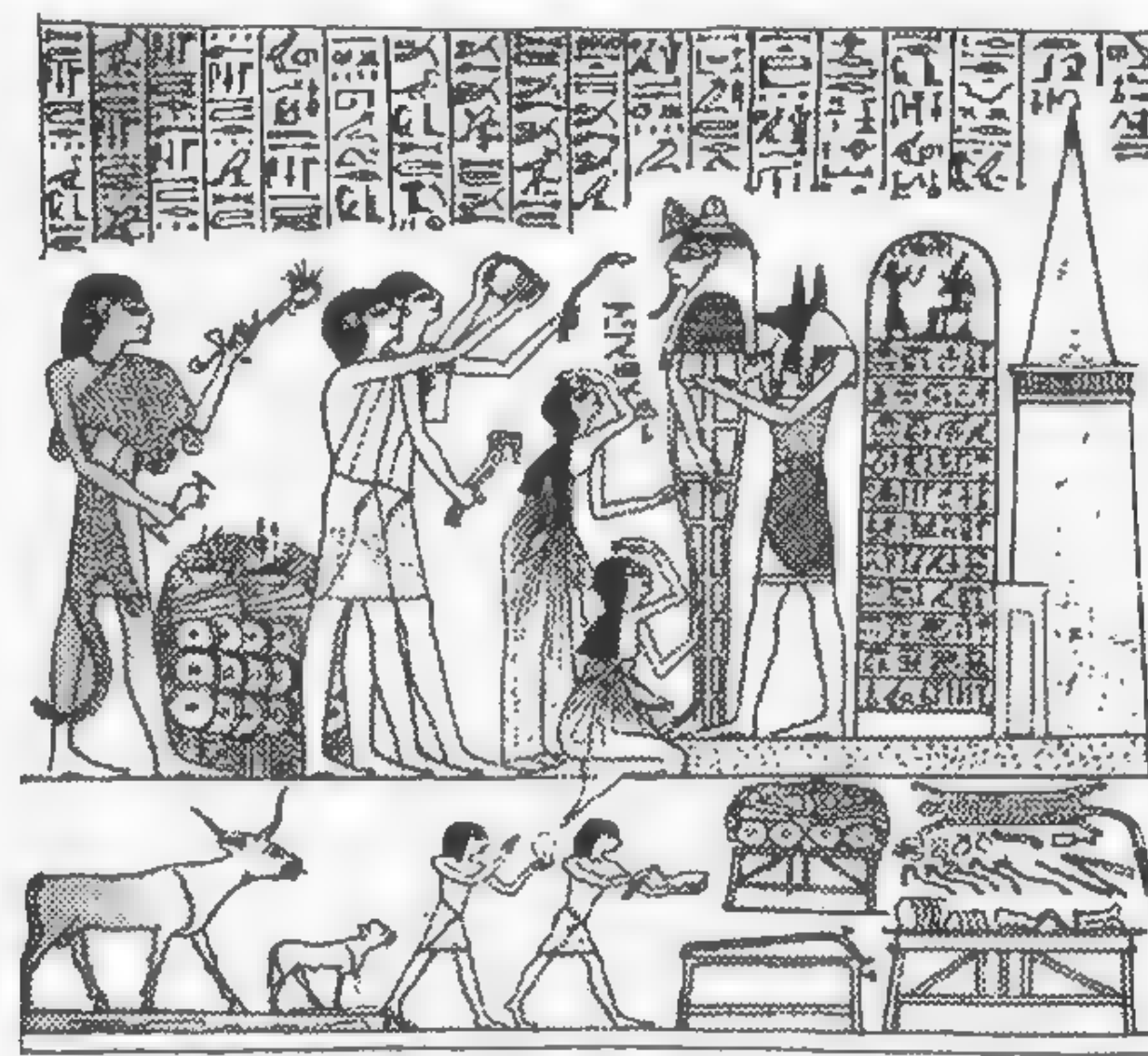
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the afterlife. The son, or representative thereof, would lay pieces of iron on the deceased' mouth and eyes while the priest declared his jawbones separated. The priests addressed the gods declaring that the deceased could walk, talk, see and speak, and that its mouth was open for eternity. The ceremony of the Opening of the Mouth could take several hours to complete. When it was finished the deceased would be able to speak all of the words of power which would assure him everlasting happiness.

The mummy was now ready to be lowered to its final burial place within the tomb.

The culmination of seventy days of work and magic came when the coffin had been placed in the tomb and the opening sealed carefully while the mourners had a feast nearby.





Journey to the Underworld



With the safe entombment of the remains of the deceased accomplished, the soul could begin its hopeful journey through the many stations needed to pass before arrival at the final destination – everlasting life among the gods. Most of what we know about what was necessary for the soul to accomplish before it received its reward has been passed down through the papyri containing the Book of the Dead. The best preserved example of this “book” is the collection of writings known as the “Papyrus of Ani”. Ani, a righteous scribe, was buried in 1240 BC along with the richly illustrated papyrus containing all the magic he would need to travel to the land of the dead.

The mummy did not rest long on its pillow before the Ba was summoned to the hall of judges to begin its evaluation by the gods of the underworld. The deceased had to appear before the revered gods and make a case for admittance into everlasting life. Anubis, Thoth, Osiris, Ma’at, Ammit, Isis, Nephthys and Horus stood ready for the task of meeting the deceased. Now was when all the magic of the texts he was buried with must be called into use!



First, the Ba of the deceased was led to the Hall of Ma’at where he faced a panel of fourteen judges for whom he had to make a general accounting of the deeds in his life. If the deceased had been entombed with the proper hymns and spells, he would know exactly how to conduct himself in front of this panel and would recite the appropriate magic formulas to assure his passing of their tests. Anubis, appearing as a jackal holding the ankh amulet in his hand, then called the deceased and ordered him to stand in front of a scale balance. Ma’at, Goddess of justice, waited at the scales and proffered the ostrich feather from her hair for the next test of the deceased. The heart of the deceased, thought to contain the memory of all the person’s earthly deeds was held in the hand of Anubis, God of Embalming. He placed it on the left tray of the scale, and the feather of Ma’at was placed on the right. While the feather and the heart hung in the balance, the deceased would chant magical spells and a “negative confession”.

I have NOT told any falsehoods to any man.

I have NOT stolen from my cohorts.

I have NOT done wrong in place of truth.

I have NOT done evil.

I have NOT forced people to labor in my stead.

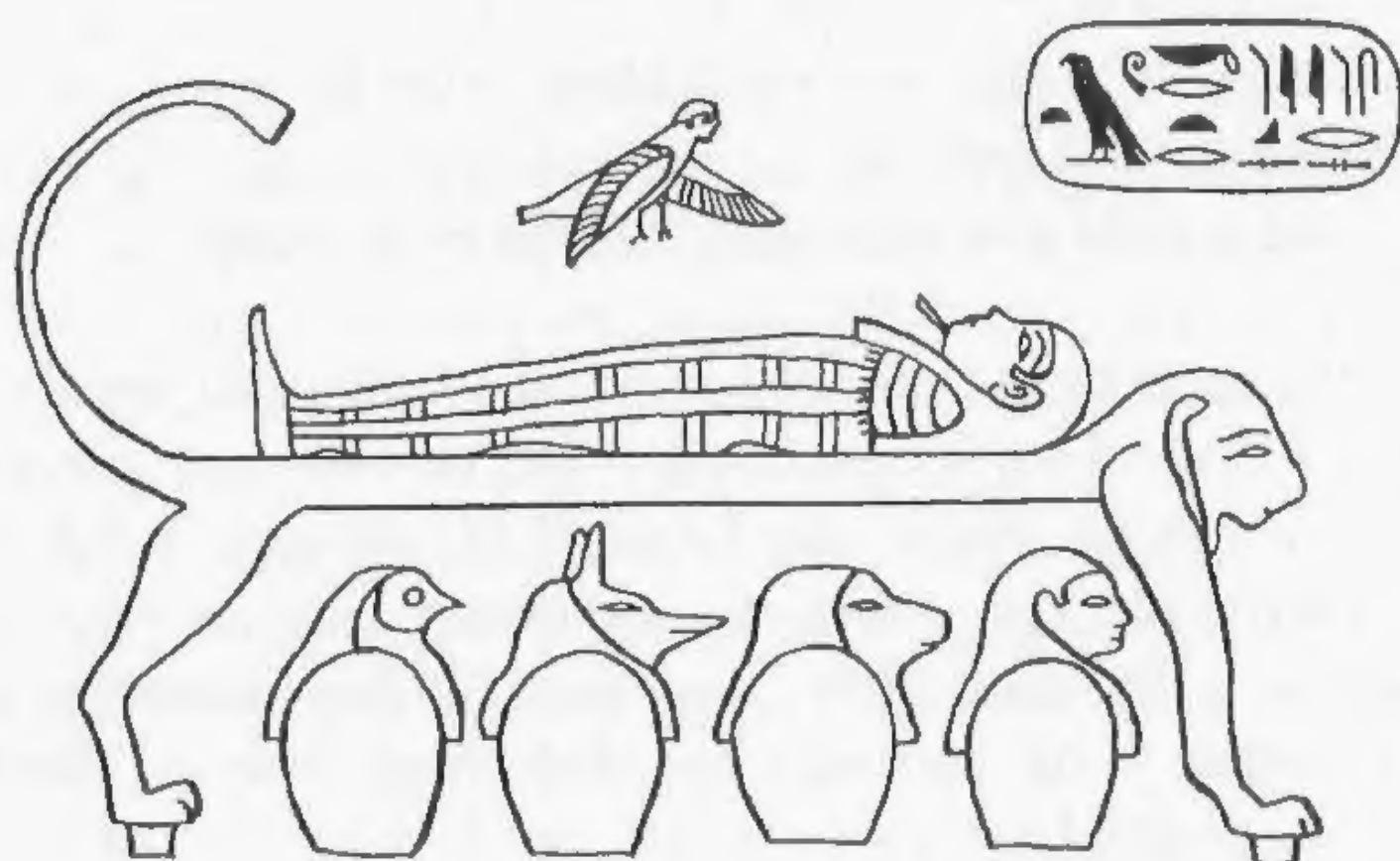
Ma’at adjusted the scale and waited for it to come to rest. If the heart weighed less than or the same as the feather, this attested to the deceased having lived a life of forthrightness and righteousness, making him worthy of passing on to the next life. If however the heart outweighed the feather – the deceased has committed “heavy” deeds which weighed on his heart and made him unworthy to



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continue the path to the afterlife. Ammit stood by with her giant ominous crocodile jaws open and ready to tear apart the poor soul whose heart was heavy. As soon as Thoth had recorded the outcome of the test on his slate the deceased would either be grabbed on the spot by Ammit and condemned to eternal oblivion, or escorted to the next station on his journey.

The righteous soul who passed the weighing of the heart was met by Horus who, representing all the Pharaoh's in the afterlife provided food and drink before leading the way onward to Osiris, the judgment god. Osiris sat at the top of a flight of stairs, wrapped as a mummy and wearing a white crown. In ancient art we see Osiris depicted holding two symbols in his hand – the crook of the shepherd, which represented his task as “shepherd of man” and a thrashing tool, representing his job as separator of “wheat from chaff”



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among the deceased who stood before him. Isis, dressed in red, and Nephthys in green, welcomed the souls to the underworld along with their husband and brother Osiris. Together these three gods would accompany the deceased to the gates of the afterlife and assign him a location in the underworld in which to live.

It must be emphasized that at any step in the judgment process a soul could make a mistake or obstacles could be set in his path making his path to the next life fraught with danger and uncertainty. A constant litany of magic spells had to be recited at just the right moments in order to overcome any of these potential pitfalls. The texts with which the deceased had been so carefully buried gave him the necessary magic words and tools to succeed. Without the magic, he would have no hope. Even after the soul had received judgment and had passed its tests, without the knowledge of the proper names for the doors, lamps, keyholes, and such which surrounded the Hall of Ma'at, passage was not allowed.

After breaking bread with Osiris, the deceased had to pass the seven “Arit”, or gates. The Arit had guards keeping anyone out of their proximity who did not know the right magic words and spells. Again, the deceased called upon the materials he's been entombed with for the magic which would allow him to pass. Only recitation of the proper names of all the guards and sentinels who stood at the gates would allow the soul to move forward. Once past the Arit, Osiris' twenty one Pylons awaited. The deceased had to know each of their true names and the proper spell to recite in order to gain passage.



When all of these frightening obstacles had been overcome by the successful use of magic, the soul was ready to receive immortality and to become like the gods. He is given the eyes of Hathor, the back of Seth, the stomach of Sekhmet, and buttocks like the eyes of Horus, the phallus of Osiris, the feet of Ptah, and the thighs of Nut. The face and cheeks become like those of Ra and Isis. When each part of the body has been bestowed with godlike characteristics, the transformation is complete and the deceased is a god himself.

From the Papyrus of Ani we see that Ani's heart was indeed light as a feather and that he was able to call forth all the magic needed to complete the journey to the other side. He greeted his protectors, Isis and Nephthys, who were charged with his protection as they had protected Osiris.

The magic in Ani's tomb served him, and he lived well among the gods. Ani recited the spell that caused his shawabti to come to life and begin to plow the fields of heaven, and armed with the full and correct names of seven cows, Ani was able to overpower them and they provide him with meat and milk.

When the deceased emerged into his full godlike existence, it was dawn in the underworld. The Book of the Dead was actually called the Chapters of Coming Forth by Day, since it was believed the soul executed the tasks necessary to arrive in the afterlife during the night, emerging triumphant in the morning in a land where wheat grew taller than men and peace and happiness reigned.



The ancient culture of Egypt was renowned for the role of spells and magic in everyday life. The Egyptian priests were known for their magical prowess, as is illustrated in the biblical story that tells of Moses being pitted against the Egyptian sorcerers in a magic contest. Students and scholars came from all over the world to learn magic from the ancient Egyptians.

Because of the great importance of spells and magic in the daily life of the ancient Egyptians, numerous written accounts of these magical powers were immortalized on papyrus and on headstones. Compelling in-depth research has enabled us to present a comprehensive "map" of ancient Egyptian magic.

Joseph Toledano is an active archeologist who organizes rescue digs in the Mediterranean region, in places in which there is danger of damage to archeological sites as a result of building and development projects.

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